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ESSAY ON MILTON

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ESSAY ON MILTON

EDITED

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JAMES GREENLEAF CROSWELL, A.B.

HEAD-MASTER OF THE BREARLEY SCHOOL; FORMERLY ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
GREEK IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

IT is hard for an editor of a book designed for formal study to determine precisely what parts of the learning that has gathered about his subject should be regarded as indispensable to young students. It is harder still for the editor of a book designated, in the new uniform entrance requirements, for current reading and not for formal study, to determine what he may assume as already a part of the pupil's knowledge. Two methods of treatment at once suggest themselves. He may annotate the text very sparingly, on the assumption that an intelligent boy knows enough to read ordinary English prose literature understandingly, and should be forced to find out for himself the meaning of words or allusions that he does not comprehend. Or he may annotate profusely, on the much sounder assumption that boys and girls are not living dictionaries and encyclopædias, and scarcely ought to be expected to interrupt reading which they are encouraged to enjoy in order to search various volumes for information that might just as well be put at once before them. Both extremes the editor of the present volume has tried to avoid. He has endeavored to give the pupil such facts as will enable him to read rapidly and understandingly; he has endeavored also to stimulate in the pupil an intelligent curiosity in regard to matters worth further investigation and further knowledge.

This edition of Macaulay's essay follows the authoritative text of which Longmans, Green, and Co. are the publishers.

J. G. C.

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J. G. C.

- §§ 72-78. *Second topic: Milton's association with the Regicides and Cromwell.* §§ 72-75. *The execution of Charles not so very different a measure from the deposition of James. But even if one disapproves of the regicide, one may admit the necessity of defending it at that time.* §§ 75-78. *Discussion of Cromwell's good government compared with Parliament's betrayal of trust on one side and the Stuart misgovernment on the other.*
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- §§ 87-92. **THIRD DIVISION OF THE ESSAY: MILTON'S PROSE-WRITINGS.** *His pamphlets devoted to the emancipation of human thought.*
- §§ 92 to End. **CONCLUSION.** *A vision of Milton.*

1. THE Essay on Milton was published in the *Edinburgh Review* in August, 1825. The author was born in 1800, and was thus at the date of publication just twenty-five years old. Except for some papers in *Knight's Quarterly*, one of which, "Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton touching the Great Civil War," covers some of the ground of this essay, there was practically as yet nothing of Macaulay's in print. Yet though it was thus an experiment from a comparatively untried man, this article proved to be one of those astonishing successes which now and then befall new authors. Like Lord Byron, the young Macaulay "awoke one morning and found himself famous." He became at once after the publication of this essay one of the best-known men in England. "The family breakfast-table in Bloomsbury," says his sister, "was covered with cards of invitation to dinner from every quarter of London." He was made a friend by men of letters, scholars, and statesmen; and from this time his life ran on in that almost unbroken current of agreeable and well-rewarded industry which has been made the subject of one of the most charming

biographies in the world, Sir George Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay."

2. As we are thus dealing with what was practically Macaulay's first great work, we might naturally expect to find in it some of the characteristic weaknesses of a novice. Macaulay himself, in the preface to the collection of his essays made in 1843, found this fault with it. "The criticism on Milton," says he, "which was written when the author was just from college, contains scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approves, and remains overloaded with faulty and ungraceful ornament." Now, blemishes of this sort, to be sure, do appear. Matthew Arnold, for instance, well objects to the description of Milton's "conception of love" (page 45) that it is, when analyzed, nothing but nonsense; Frederic Harrison well objects to his description of the Restoration (page 70) that it is really too much to say of the careless and good-natured Charles II. that he was "a cruel idol propitiated by the best blood of England's children." Any careful reader of the essay will find almost anywhere other similar exaggerations of phrase. It is not true, for instance, that Milton died in a "hovel" or in "disgrace;" nor would Milton's daughters have "contested" with anybody the privilege of reading Greek to him. But, on the whole, considered as the work of a "young man just from college," the essay is particularly free from the faults of youth. Such faults as it has are at worst pleasing faults, characteristic of Macaulay's best writing all his life long. It is full of vivid color, smartly written, and showing already the certain touch of a master of historical composition.

3. But there are criticisms which have been made upon the essay with more justice than these. For one thing, critics have said that, considered as a literary study, it does not contain a thorough discussion of Milton's work. Very

important poems are in fact ignored entirely. They complain of a memorial of Milton which does not mention "The Ode on the Nativity" at all, that poem which Hallam called "the most beautiful poem in the English language," or even allude to "Lycidas," which Pattison says is "the high-water mark of English Poesy and of Milton's own production." Then again, to other critics, the tone of perpetual eulogy of Milton's conduct seems over-strained and almost too contentious. The thing sounds like an argument in a debate, wherein the reader will finally be expected to give a vote. But there is a special reason in Macaulay's situation not only for the narrow scope of the treatment of Milton but also for the argumentative strain.

4. Political prejudice in Macaulay's day still interfered with men's estimate of John Milton. The judgment of society in 1825, which is reflected in the *Waverley Novels*, like "Woodstock," for instance, was the judgment which might be passed upon Milton's work by a good English Tory, in a day when, "a youth of Tory family," says Lord Cockburn, "who was discovered to have a leaning to the doctrines of the opposition, was considered a lost son." Nothing contributed more to strengthen and to prolong the unjust views of the Tories about Milton than the universal reading of the life of Milton composed by the great eighteenth-century critic, Dr. Samuel Johnson. It was so good a book that in 1825 it was, so to speak, the regular authoritative source of information about Milton. But Dr. Johnson was haunted by the tradition of the cavaliers that any rebel against the king must have been either a self-deceived hypocrite or else "dishonest." Apparently he thought this evil thing about Milton. No one can imagine without reading the book how readily this extraordinary biographer takes any chance to discredit the motives of Milton's acts, and how much this general prejudice against the poet's political conduct blinds him to the liter-

ary quality of Milton's work. Furthermore, the Doctor's judgment of Milton's work, even where he forgets his politics, is warped by continual reference to conventional rules which he considered authoritative principles in æsthetics. There is a Toryism even in his literary sympathies. A few quotations from the "Life" will exhibit this odd tone, and will explain why we hear in the Essay so much about Dr. Johnson, as well as about "certain critics," which phrase usually means Dr. Johnson.

5. First, Dr. Johnson makes all the use he can of doubtful notices in Milton's biographers to the possible discredit of the poet's character. A good example is his emphatic reference to Aubrey's incorrect statement that Milton was "whipt" at college, or, in Johnsonese, "suffered the public indignity of corporal correction." Secondly, Dr. Johnson twists the most innocent and honorable acts into causes of offence and ridicule when he recalls Milton's relations to Church and King. For instance, when the civil war broke out, Milton gave up his journey to Italy, closed the "sweet-scented manuscript of youth," and returned at once to give his life to the Puritan cause. He became, as Macaulay says, "the devoted and eloquent literary champion" of the principles of liberty. While thus contending on the side of Parliament by his pen, he supported himself by teaching a few pupils. "He taught," says Philips, one of the scholars, his sister's son, "only relations and the sons of gentlemen that were his friends; he never set up for a publick school to teach all the young fry of a parish." At the present day this act is justly considered one of his best titles to our respect and admiration. But listen to the Tory Doctor. "Let not our veneration for Milton," says Johnson, "forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene

of action vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding school." Again, Milton's pamphlets doubtless were written in a savage tone. No editorial contests in any political controversy of our day could now be conducted so fiercely. "Milton's capacity for emotion," says Pattison, "when once he became champion of a cause, could not be contained within the bounds of ordinary speech. It breaks into terrific blasts of vituperation, beneath which the very language creaks, as the timbers of a ship in a storm." But Johnson's word for this Miltonic wrath is "malignity." "Hell grows darker at his frown," quotes the Doctor.

6. These hostile feelings might be pardoned to the devout Toryism of Johnson if he had kept them for the life and political acts of Milton. What Macaulay could not pardon was the jealous tone of his literary criticism. Who, indeed, could accept calmly this remark, applied in Johnson's "Life" to the great Sonnet XXIII. ? "His wife died, and he honoured her memory with a poor sonnet." Or this, of the splendid testimonial to Cromwell? "Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery." Or this, about Lycidas? "The diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, the numbers displeasing. Its form is that of a pastoral; easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting." The sonnets Dr. Johnson naturally hated; they are full of Puritanism. But he might have found better words to say of them than these: "Of the best [sonnets] it can only be said they are not bad, and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation." Even over "Paradise Lost," whose excellences are generally commended by him, though accounted for rather curiously, Johnson has to quarrel with the poet for what he maintains to be his illogical confusions of spirit and matter and his incongruous pictures of angelic substance. Finally, Milton's splendid style, which Matthew Arnold named the

only specimen in our literature of the "grand style" of Homer and Dante, Dr. Johnson asserts is founded "on a perverse and pedantic principle." All this is certainly the product of a critical faculty judging through fogs of political prejudice and under the iron rules of dogmatic critical tradition.

7. But the controversial purposes of Macaulay in the article on Milton published in the great Whig review went further than the holding of a critical tournament with Dr. Johnson. All the second half of the essay has little to do with literature. It is devoted to the condemnation of the Stuarts, and the eulogy of the Puritans, and it has a warmth reflected from Macaulay's present political sympathies, and from the new-born ardor for freedom of the young English Liberals of 1825. Under cover of a historical study of John Milton, Macaulay has here written a very good Whig party pamphlet. A few words, therefore, in explanation of the contemporary political situation of 1825 will make the spirit of the latter part of the essay clearer and perhaps more interesting to readers of the present day.

8. The year 1825 was a year full of storm in many quarters of the sky. "Those mighty principles which have worked their way into the depths of American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear," were likewise working in the hearts of young Englishmen of Macaulay's age. Two opposite ideals of government, likened by Macaulay to the two gods of the Persian theology, Oromasdes and Arimanes, were standing face to face in Europe as they stood in the days of the Stuarts. In England the party of popular government was represented by the

Whigs and the Liberal section of the Tory party acting under Canning; the party of firm monarchical principles was represented by the King (George IV.), the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool,—the older Tory party, containing far the larger part of English society. In Europe at large the principle of firm despotic authority was then maintained by the “Holy Alliance.” This was a union formed by the monarchs of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, and largely directed by the policy of Prince Metternich, the Austrian minister. This alliance had been first made after Waterloo, when there fell upon all Europe a great desire for peace. Strong government under well-constituted authority seemed desirable then to every nation. All were weary of the upturnings of the French Revolution. These monarchs guaranteed that in all Europe there should be no more disturbance. “Useful or necessary changes in legislation,” they said in a famous circular letter, “and in the administration of states ought only to emanate from the free-will and the intelligent and well-weighed conviction of those whom God has rendered responsible for power.” This was a tone acceptable even to English policy in that year. But opposition was sure to come soon, and, oddly enough, the first opposition to the principles of the alliance occurred in Spain. Spain had been restored, after the overthrow of Napoleon, to its old Bourbon king, Ferdinand the Seventh. Ferdinand had promptly reversed all measures of progress taken in that kingdom since 1812, and thereby quarrelled with his liberal subjects. Serious rioting resulted; in spite of the efforts of the Holy Alliance in the king’s cause, neither side was completely successful. The infection of revolt spread to the Spanish colonies in America. They seized the moment to rebel against Spain, and under the leadership of men like the great Bolivar, in the “depths of the American forests,” the colonies broke away from the mother-coun-

try and founded the present South American republics. All this movement was watched in England with much sympathy for the insurgents. Young Englishmen even served in the armies and navies of the South American rebels. Next came Italy. In Naples also there was at this time an absolute monarch of Spanish descent. Here, also, the people rebelled and secured a constitution. But, though not successful in Spanish affairs, the Holy Alliance succeeded in Italy in crushing the popular movement. Austrian troops were sent in and took away, in the name of religion and good government, the hopes of freedom which the Neapolitans and Sicilians had begun to enjoy. Still another uprising was in Macaulay's mind as he wrote the story of Milton. Greece had just revolted against her Turkish masters. Even while this essay was penned, the heroic defence of Missolonghi was taking place; and with the enthusiastic support of many cultured and high-spirited young men from all the nations of the Christian world, Greece was just winning for herself her title to independence. With these great struggles all over the world going on before his eyes, there was a peculiar zest for Macaulay, who loved to identify present politics and past history, in discussing just then the great historic conflicts of the Stuarts and the people of England over the same momentous problems of government which were then agitating the nations of Continental Europe. Lastly, Macaulay wrote this essay with a heart full of interest in a great political movement in England itself, namely, the effort making in 1825 for the relief of his Catholic fellow-citizens from their civil disabilities. The laws against Catholics in Great Britain, and still more in Ireland, since the time of William and Anne, had been, as is well known, most severe. Catholics were excluded from the succession to the crown of England after the Revolution of 1688. But they were also excluded from the right to sit

in Parliament, or to hold any magistracy or receive degrees at the universities. Irish Catholics were practically put in absolute subjection to a Protestant Parliament supported by English arms in Dublin. This Parliament, during the eighteenth century, ordained that no Catholic might carry arms, buy or inherit real estate, or own a horse worth more than £5. Under such laws the country was almost ruined commercially and socially, though the Catholic church rather increased in numbers. Now in 1825 Ireland was struggling to obtain some relief. The country had been agitated by this effort for a generation. Ireland was now divided into two camps, the Orange lodges of Protestants on one side, the Catholic Association and the Ribbonmen on the other. The two sides vied with each other in hatred and outrage. The English nation divided over them. Liberals in both parties took up the cause of Catholic emancipation. Lord Althorp, afterward the champion of the Reform Bill, and the Whig Lord Lansdowne, who, in 1830, helped Macaulay into Parliament, were endeavoring once more to obtain civil equality for their Catholic fellow-citizens. The "unbending Tories," like Wellington and Peel, on the other side, resisted change, quoting, to defend their ideas of the proper method of dealing with Irish Catholics, the example of the great Whig hero, William the Third. But a bill for the relief of the Catholics had just passed the Commons. It was, however, rejected in the Lords under the influence of the Tories. The Royal Duke of York, at that time a possible heir to the throne, came down and made a speech on the extreme Protestant side, which was very influential in defeating the bill. The "victory" of the anti-Catholics was celebrated with rejoicing. The Protestants had a public dinner in London in honor of it, at which the Duke of York drank the "glorious and immortal memory of William III." amid wild cheering.

9. In a year of such political excitement we can imagine the feelings which were animating the young author of this paper. Such are the feelings we must in a measure understand if we would appreciate his work rightly. We must not gauge it solely as a contribution to the study of Milton's place in English literature. We must be prepared to find political sympathies getting uppermost in the author's interest in the subject, and we shall consequently find that his political paragraphs, as, for example, the eulogy of the Puritans on page 78, are far the best part of the essay. Let us freely admit that there is much justification for this way of treating Milton. With all due respect to English literature, in which Milton's poetry is so bright a glory, the making of verses has not been the only service or even the chief service of the English race to mankind. When the final account of things is made up, England will be able to say of her history something in the strain of Virgil's proud verses about Rome in the Sixth Book of the "*Æneid*." Whatever artistic and literary glories other nations may have had, the English have built the greatest political structures of popular representative government in all the world. And it has been again and again due to Anglo-Saxon history, in both hemispheres, especially of the last three hundred years, that "government of the people, for the people, by the people" has not perished from the earth. So that Milton, the Puritan Secretary of the Commonwealth, may well be remembered in any critical account of him as gratefully as Milton the poet and scholar. As Heine, the German poet, said of himself, Macaulay's essay seems justly to say of Milton, "Lay not laurel-leaves on that coffin, but a sword. For he was a good soldier in the warfare of humanity."

10. John Milton had three threads of three widely different destinies spun into one for him by the Fates. The first part of his life, his boyhood and family history, his

study and private reading, connected him with the England of his father, with music and song, with the happy singers of Elizabeth's day, whose influence is so plain in his early poetry. The second part of his life, his education at school and college, tied him to the Puritans, to the "rigorous teachers who seized his youth," moulding his life by the high religious purposes of that noble but unhappy party; and the third cord, red and dismal, running through the life and occupations of his manhood, bound him to the troubled life of political dissension in the blood-stained England of Charles and of Cromwell. In "Paradise Lost" one sees at last these influences erecting together an harmonious whole of unique beauty. That is a great song of a true-born singer relating in the imagery of an immortal epic the origin of all the world's sorrows as a blind Puritan of the lost Commonwealth had had knowledge of them. The first part of his life promised him only happiness in the joy of his chosen art of poetry. He was born in 1608, and like Chaucer, Spenser, Cowley, and Keats, in the city of London itself. The name of the house of his birth was the "Spread Eagle." It was in Bread Street, Cheapside; but like the other houses which Milton lived in, it exists no longer. Though not the eldest, he was the very dearest son of his father, described as "an ingeniose man delighting in musique," who gave him a careful education at St. Paul's school and at home also. In books John Milton was from the tenderest years a student. His brother relates that "when he went to schoole, when he was very younge, he studied very hard and sate up very late: commonly till twelve or one o'clock at night, and his father ordered the mayde to sitt up for him; and in those yeares [10] he composed many copies of verses which might well become a ripe age. And was a very hard student in the University and performed all his exercises there with very good applause." He went to Christ College in

the Puritan University of Cambridge at the age of seventeen, remaining there till he was twenty-four. The boys there called him "The Lady" because of his fair complexion, graceful appearance, and a certain haughty delicacy of taste and habit. While here he wrote among other things the great "Ode on the Nativity," the "Sonnet on arriving at the Age of Twenty-three," and a good deal of Latin verse. After leaving college he had been meaning to take orders. But he felt himself at that time unable to become a minister of the English Church, as his family had apparently expected. He was not in harmony with the church government of that day, and he already cherished the purpose of giving his life to the making of great poetry. So he retired to his father's country-house in Horton, and lived in quiet, reading classic and Italian authors, and writing. What he wrote here was already of the greatest poetic excellence. If his life had gone on as it began at Horton, he would have ranked among the sweetest of the lyric poets of England, with a strong resemblance to the singers of the previous generation, the beautiful minstrels of the age of Elizabeth. In these days of happiness "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Comus" came into being; and the beautiful Latin poem to his father; and finally, just as he was going on his Italian journey, he composed, as a memorial to a dead college friend, the great "Lycidas."

11. After three years in the country at Horton, Milton spent fifteen months in Italy. He enjoyed, we may believe, one of the happiest periods of his life there. He visited Paris, Nice, Genoa, Leghorn, Pisa, stayed two months (August and September) in Florence, where occurred his famous visit to the blind Galileo, "a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy otherwise than as the Franciscan and Dominican licensers taught." He met in Florence many young Italian literary men, who became his

courteous admirers and friends. From Florence he went to Rome for two months more. From Rome he went to Naples, where he became the guest of the old Marquis of Villa, Manso. There is an allusion on page 17 of the essay to the beautiful Latin poem he wrote out of gratitude to the marquis. And then he was just going to Sicily and to Greece when the news from England came which, one may say, ended this early joyous chapter in his life, and cost English literature the poet of the "Comus," if it gave her the poet of "Paradise Lost," and "Samson Agonistes." He turned back to his distracted native land to enter the great civil conflict already beginning there. On his way back to England he passed a few weeks again in Rome, and again two months in Florence. Then he went to Geneva by way of Venice, Verona, and Milan, staying a few days with his friends the Diodati family in Switzerland. In August, 1639, he was at home again, living at first by himself as a quiet student. But he never wrote after this with the sweet tone of the matchless verses of his youth. "His piping took a troubled sound" in the uproar of conflict which was arising in England over the issues between king and parliament.

12. It is going to be necessary, if we are intelligently to follow Macaulay's discussion of Milton's conduct, which occupies the whole latter half of this essay, to muster up all our information about the English history of the seventeenth century, which our author treats as a matter of common knowledge. The best book, perhaps, for such a purpose would be Macaulay's own "History of England," reading at least the first two chapters. Macaulay's essay on Hallam's "Constitutional History" is as good. The great work upon this period, too large to read hastily, is to be seen in the stately volumes of Gardiner's "History of the Civil War." If that is inaccessible, one may read Gardiner's contribution to the Epoch Series, "The Puritan

Revolution." The two beautiful chapters of John Richard Green's "Short History," called "Puritan England," and "The Revolution," will help one exceedingly who has not much time to give to searching in larger books, and desires the most modern and impartial view. For Macaulay, whatever he may be, is not impartial in judging of seventeenth-century history.

Macaulay treats the whole question of Milton's conduct in this period of his life somewhat peculiarly. He does not discuss its details; he takes up instead the "naked constitutional question," whether that party which resisted and finally executed the king was legally and morally right. This question he does not decide on its merits, but by an appeal to the action of the Englishmen of the next generation, who expelled from the throne James II. If this revolution of 1688 was justified (and no Englishman of modern days will deny that it was justified), then, to justify the party which drove Charles I. from the throne, Macaulay has but to show that Charles I. did the same things in 1649 that James II. did in 1688. We may here consider for a moment the well-known story of the Great Rebellion in order to follow intelligently, as we have said, Macaulay's argument upon this topic.

13. Charles I. entered upon his reign in 1625, inheriting a fatal legacy from his father, James I. The first two Stuarts held the doctrine of the "divine right of kings" in a peculiarly extravagant form. They believed, as Macaulay says in his history, that God "regarded hereditary monarchy, as opposed to other forms of government, with peculiar favour, that the rule of succession through eldest sons was a divine institution, that no human power could deprive the legitimate prince of his rights; that the laws by which the prerogative was limited were merely concessions which the sovereign had freely made and might at his pleasure resume; that any treaty into which a king might

enter with his people was merely a declaration of his present intentions and not a contract of which performance could be demanded." This theory, says Macaulay, was never one of the "fundamental laws of England." On the contrary, it contradicted many facts of English history. But it found many advocates among those who were at that time about the king, and, in particular, made rapid progress among the clergy of the Established Church. On the other hand, it enraged and disgusted most Englishmen, who, under the influence of the Protestant religions of that century, were coming to have more and more respect for the new divine right of the people, and the right of private judgment. It was the baleful influence of this theory, that a king was a person so above the law that he could not make a binding contract with his people, which stained Charles's name with the reproach of tyranny and faithlessness. He was, though in other relations in life a high-minded gentleman, in the exercise of his office as monarch, as his people soon found, perfidious on principle. When the parties divided over that question in the reign of Charles, the party of the Parliament stood up at first only for the privileges of the subject established by law; while the party of the king supported only the royal "prerogative," that is, the general powers which a monarch possesses, not to be stated or defined by law. Both sides had something of right. The English king certainly had always had such general powers. He could, for example, convoke and dissolve Parliaments at such dates as he thought fit; he commanded the armies of England; he treated alone with foreign powers. Such irresponsible powers are always needed under any form of government and were known in England as the "prerogatives" of the sovereign. But the Parliament rightly maintained that there were limitations to the "prerogative" of very ancient date in England. First, they said, no English

king ought to legislate without the consent of Parliament ; secondly, the king could impose no taxes without the consent of Parliament ; thirdly, he was, after all, with all his prerogatives, bound to conduct his administration in accordance with the laws of the land, and if he broke these laws, his advisers and agents were responsible. These were the opinions of the young Milton, and of nearly all the Puritan side. But the king held opposite views ; and the difference soon appeared in practical politics. At his first entry into power Charles had quarrelled with his people over a question of foreign policy ; and the Parliament, to bring him down, refused supplies. Charles then attempted to raise money for the expenses of his government, without any taxes from Parliament, by forced loans, and by other devices, and tried to put down opposition by arbitrary imprisonments. In 1628 Parliament retorted by sending him the "Petition of Right." This document begged (1) prohibition of all forms of taxation, forced loans, "benevolences," and so on, without consent of Parliament ; (2) that soldiers should not be billeted in private houses ; (3) that there should be no martial law in time of peace ; (4) that no one should be imprisoned except on a specified charge. Charles assented to these proposals, and received as a reward five subsidies from Parliament. But he very soon prorogued Parliament, and went on levying royal taxes without the people's consent. Parliament angrily met again to resist the king. The speaker, acting under the king's orders, attempted to choke off debate, but the great Eliot offered his famous resolutions, which were passed while the speaker was held down in the chair. The king instantly dissolved the Parliament. For the eleven following years, from 1629 to 1640, while Milton was at college, reading in the country, and in Italy, Charles was governing without Parliament at all. By the exercise of his prerogative the king was raising money,

making peace and war, introducing distasteful changes in religious discipline, and imprisoning and fining and putting in the pillory men who resisted anything he did. His advisers and helpers were leading him onward in this mistaken course. In particular, Lord Strafford and Archbishop Laud are still remembered for these errors with sorrow and even abhorrence. By a "thorough" policy of repression and enforcement of conformity to the king's will, this party hoped to make the English monarchy just what the Stuart theory of divine right declared it should be, an unlimited despotism. Laud desired to bring the influence of an obedient church, "the handmaid of arbitrary authority," to the support of the Stuart throne. Strafford, going over to Ireland as lord deputy, tried to provide, by a ruthless military *régime*, troops and money to be used in coercing England. To check the rising tide of wrath among his subjects, the advisers of the king developed tribunals, in the name of the "prerogative," to fine, imprison, and pillory such people as they considered dangerous to their policy. The best remembered of these at this day are the "High Commission," a royal commission first created by Elizabeth to help her order ecclesiastical matters, and the "Star Chamber," originally a committee of Council called by the Tudor Kings (and even earlier) to treat of cases not determinable by common law. Then came the invention of "ship-money," and John Hampden's unsuccessful resistance at law. These were dark days for English liberty.

14. Milton came home from Italy just as the Scotch Presbyterian uprising was forcing Strafford and Charles to abandon their policy of "thorough" repression and call Parliament together again. After a year or two of anxious watching, under the excitement of the acts of the Long Parliament, Milton entered public life (as we should say) by publishing, in 1641, several pamphlets on the questions of

the day. This was his first contribution to the Liberal side of the struggle. In days when there was of course no regular newspaper press, these tracts would have the effect in influencing public opinion which is attained in our time by the works of the great editors and writers of political journals. It was one of Milton's occupations to issue such tracts all through the war. He thus played the part in the Rebellion which would now be given to a great journalist in modern politics. He handled chiefly political subjects, but also some subjects not political. For instance, as he was maintaining himself in part by teaching, this interest induced him to write his famous tractate "On Education : to Mr. Samuel Hartlib," in June, 1644. But in all these years (1638-1649) his main interest was in politics and in the war. Except the sonnets written from time to time to commemorate an occasion of public interest, his poetical compositions almost ceased. He began his prose-writing, as we have said, in 1641 by publishing five pamphlets in a current controversy about "Church Government," advocating the abolition of the office of bishop in the Church of England. His next subject was divorce. In the years 1643 and 1644 he printed four pamphlets to show that any marriages ought to be dissolved if husband and wife were not suitable mates for each other. This subject was doubtless brought to his mind by the unlucky experiences of his own sudden marriage in 1643 with Mary Powell, a young girl of seventeen, daughter of a Royalist. But the matter took on a public and political importance. These pamphlets on divorce brought Milton into a quarrel with his political friends of the Presbyterian party. The Westminster Assembly, a body of divines called together by act of the Long Parliament to advise them upon the religious settlement of England, took offence at these very independent doctrines about marriage and tried to have Milton "investigated" by a Parliamentary committee. This act of

theirs separated him forever from the Presbyterian party. It had the effect, moreover, of stimulating him to write in 1644 his greatest pamphlet, "Areopagitica: a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing: to the Parliament of England." Macaulay speaks on page 84 of this great and beautiful work, which anticipates by more than a hundred years the modern principle of freedom of the press as it was at last introduced and upheld in England and America.

15. It will be seen by one who follows his writing carefully, that as the fight with the king went on, Milton's eager spirit carried him on in the heat of his arguments to separate himself more and more from the moderate supporters of Parliament, consisting chiefly of the Presbyterians and the Scotch party, and to join with the Independents, whose centre was in the army of the military saints commanded by Cromwell. He wrote in their interest, after the execution of the king, his famous pamphlet "On the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawfull and hath been held so in all ages for any who have the power to call to account a wicked king or tyrant, and after due conviction to depose and put him to death. The author J. M. 1649." This act identified him finally with the "regicides" and the party of Cromwell. He thought he saw the true principles of liberty there maintained; and here was a refuge for his own imaginative radicalism, which separated him from most parties in the nation. The king had proved, as even his friends ought to admit, an unfit governor of his country in that stormy time. The issues at stake in religion and policy were too difficult for him even to understand. But to Milton and to the Puritans, Charles Stuart was worse than a mistaken partisan; he was the very incarnation of evil. He had made himself guilty of all the innocent blood shed in the war. "The military saints of the army resolved," says Macaulay

in his history, "in defiance of the old laws of the realm, and of the almost universal sentiment of the nation, that the king should expiate his crimes with his blood. A revolutionary tribunal was created; that tribunal pronounced Charles a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy, and his head was severed from his shoulders before thousands of spectators in front of the banqueting hall of his own palace." So Milton defended this act as a legitimate method of disposing of unsatisfactory "kings and magistrates."

16. After the king's execution the government of England was decreed to be "by way of a republic." The executive administration was nominally intrusted to a Council of State of forty-one members, though the army and Cromwell actually held supreme power. This council in 1649 made John Milton its Secretary for Foreign Tongues. In 1653, when Cromwell dismissed the Rump and founded his Protectorate, according to the "Instrument of Government," a similar council was established, under which Milton held the same office. His duties in these offices were simply to write in his beautiful Latin (the best Latin in Europe of that day) such documents as the government desired to send to foreign powers, and to interpret such documents as came from abroad. In addition to these regular duties, he had a general oversight of any literary work needed by the commonwealth. Such literary tasks were immediately put into his hands. The regicide had to be apologized for and the king's propaganda to be met. The Royalists in 1649 were reading and circulating a book called "Eikon Basiliké" (The King's Image), professing to be a legacy from the dead king, containing the thoughts and prayers of his last hours. Milton was employed to write a book to meet the dangerous popularity of this work. He wrote a tract called "Eikonoclastes: the Image Breaker," criticising and sneering in what one must

say is a rude, brawling tone at the pious sentiments of the king. The Council thought so well of this tract, as to employ Milton again, in 1653, on a similar task. The Royalists, desiring to bring the king's cause before the cultivated and governing classes of Europe, had issued a Latin tract called *Defensio regia*. It was done for them in Holland by a famous Leyden professor, Claude Saumaise, "Salmasius," as he was known to the reading world. Milton answered it by a tract called *Defensio pro populo Anglicano*. This book of Milton's is chiefly interesting as an exhibition of the ferocious personalities which passed for controversy at that time. No cross-roads country editors ever abused each other as these great scholars of European dignity and reputation did. The main question in the *Defensio* about the king is almost lost under a flood of personalities about Salmasius. But the book created a great stir in the highest circles. Milton is said to have received the compliments of every embassy in London on account of the book. "The only inducement," says Aubrey, of this period, "of severall foreigners that came over to England was chiefly to see O. Protector and Mr. J. Milton." But the book has also the sad interest of costing the author his eyesight. Other pamphlets, including a second *Defensio pro populo*, which contains interesting portraits of some great commonwealth statesmen, were dictated and published by him during his secretaryship. There are also still in existence many public letters he wrote for the council and for Cromwell himself. In 1653 Milton's wife died, leaving him the three daughters whose education was so curious and whose attitude to their father so very unfilial. In 1656 he married Catherine Woodcock. She died in 1657, and is buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster. To her he addressed the famous Sonnet XXIII.

17. Another misfortune soon befell him. The death of

Cromwell, in 1658, changed the whole face of English politics, and with this change began the last chapter of Milton's life. After several unlucky experiments it became plain to the English nation that they had now only the choice between the old Stuart monarchy again and government by the major-generals of the Model Army. The army settled the question by beginning to quarrel for the prize, whereupon the civilians of all parties drew together for protection. A "free Parliament," supported by General Monk, brought back the Stuarts in 1660. In a last struggle for his convictions, Milton issued some English pamphlets: some on the old subject of "Church Government" and one, in the very year of the Restoration, called "A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth and the Excellence Thereof." But the day for these efforts had gone by. The king returned, and the secretary of the commonwealth and the defender of regicide was glad to vanish into poverty and private life. Why Milton was not punished among the other chiefs of the Cromwellian party is still very obscure; but after remaining in hiding for a while he was restored to liberty. His circumstances were much reduced, however, and his circle of friends much diminished. He was a discreditable acquaintance, a "detestable republican," and almost an outlaw. Such people as came about him were chiefly young men of the more devout and persecuted sects. Independent Baptists or Quakers, like young Ellwood, Andrew Marvell, Cyriac Skinner, remained faithful; Lady Ranelagh and others of his older friends and pupils visited him, and a Dr. Paget, a physician of that neighborhood, came to see him often. By Dr. Paget, Milton was recommended to marry as his third wife Elizabeth Minshull, who cherished and cared for him lovingly till his death.

Under these circumstances of comparative isolation and defeat he went back to the other and earlier hopes and

occupations of his life. He began to write poetry again, and between 1662 and 1667, at an age when poetical composition is for most poets over, he wrote "Paradise Lost." The publication of this great poem could not fail to make amends for his disgrace. It won its way slowly but surely, so that in the last years of his life he had many admirers and visitors (among others the court-poet, John Dryden), though he was probably still "more admired abroad than at home." It is of these last years we have the most distinct accounts of his person and occupations. From one of them, the notes of the painter Richardson, Macaulay takes the description of him on page 87. In 1671 Milton published "Paradise Regained," and with it "Samson Agonistes," the poem which has a special interest for Milton's admirers, who trace in it a delicate reminiscence of great dramatic scenes in his own life. These were his last poetic works. He died in 1674, at the age of sixty-six, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate, near the chancel, after a long life nearly coextensive with that of the Stuart monarchy which he tried to overthrow.

18. It is interesting to notice that in these last years of his life, when his friends were chiefly younger men and his active political life ceased, that Milton's thoughts went back to his early avocation as a school-teacher. He published at this time, from old manuscript material, a Latin grammar and a logic, and he left behind him some collections for a history and for a Latin lexicon. Among other such things he was preparing in his last days a book for the instruction of students, to contain a summary of theology. Apparently the title he meant to give it was "*Idea Theologiæ*." It was to follow the scheme of the manuals in which he used to study divinity in college, at least in the division of subjects and the titles of chapters. But the sole authority for its conclusions was to be directly derived from texts of the Bible quoted in ap-

propriate places. This book was left in the hands of one of his young friends, Mr. Daniel Skinner, unfinished. It is a book of curious interest, a sort of summary of the theology of "Paradise Lost" with every particle of poetry evaporated, like the juice out of a dried apple, and yet with poetic suggestion about passages in it. It is this book which Macaulay nominally reviews in the present essay.

19. A few more remarks about the course of Stuart politics after Milton's death will perhaps help the reader in following the latter paragraphs of the essay. The Restoration days were not altogether easy times. England had taken up her Stuart monarchy in 1660, as a refuge from the worse trouble of anarchy, as a man returns, for necessary protection against bad weather, to an old garment once discarded. It did not protect her very well. There were, to be sure, no more sufferings from ostentatious tyranny on the part of King Charles, no rebellious Parliaments in arms against royal authority; but for fifty years more there were continual movements of political parties for the overthrow of government. Protestants suspected Catholics, and passed severe penal laws against that religion. Tories suspected Whigs and procured severe laws against Protestant Dissenters. The side which got uppermost in politics condemned and executed its opponents. Such a disturbance was the Papist Plot in 1678, whose story was probably a figment composed by a band of needy adventurers who made their living as witnesses. For some reason the government pretended to believe them, and many wholly innocent Catholics lost their lives as plotters against the king. In 1680 a bill to exclude James, the king's brother, from the throne because he had become a Catholic, passed the House of Commons. The king dissolved the Parliament and summoned a new one at Oxford, hoping that the memories of the civil war and the loyalty of that old university might affect the disposition

of the members. The conduct of this Parliament, called the "Oxford Parliament," however, was so stubborn and insolent as to create a reaction in the country in favor of the king. Charles dissolved this Parliament after a session of only a few days, and the reaction continued. By 1683 the Tories had won the public confidence again. Some secret party schemes of certain great Whig nobles were discovered by the Tories, and at the same time there came out a plot cooked up by some villainous hangers-on of the Whig party to assassinate the king and his brother near the "Rye-house," a farm on the way from London to Newmarket. By a malicious confusion of the two "plots," Lord Russell and Algernon Sidney were found guilty of treason and executed. But the death of Charles in 1685 brought his Catholic brother to the throne of England. The Roman danger from which English Protestantism had been safe since the execution of Mary Queen of Scots reappeared in startling form. All other issues were swallowed up in this. In three years James had so alarmed all parties by his tyrannical acts in connection with his efforts to re-establish the Catholic religion, that people of all parties joined in inviting the Prince of Orange to enter England with Dutch troops. Thus came about the revolution of 1688, of which Macaulay says so much. Parliament laid before the Prince of Orange, who was a near heir to the crown himself, and whose wife was next heir after James and his children, a "Declaration of Right." It contains once more an assertion of the principles for which the people of England had been fighting through the lifetime of Milton. Making or suspending laws without consent of Parliament is to cease; ecclesiastical commissions are not to be made into courts; levying money without consent of Parliament is illegal; elections of members of Parliament must be free; and so on. William and Mary accepted the crown then offered them, and were proclaimed king and

queen on condition that they should abide by these principles. Henceforth the Stuart theory of divine right could never be pleaded by any English monarch again. James Stuart and his son, with the adhesion of a smaller number of Englishmen in each generation, represented themselves as kings of England by inheritance till the direct line died out. But the actual monarchs of England have held their authority ever since 1688 not by the law of inheritance but by the consent of the people. The Stuart theory of divine right was dead.

20. It would be ungrateful to Lord Macaulay not to wish to know anything more of his life than the reading of this essay involves. He went on writing for the *Edinburgh Review* a succession of brilliant papers. These were collected and published in 1843, rather against his wishes. He thought them of temporary interest only, and scarcely worthy of preservation in book-form. They have, however, remained among the most popular books in the English language ever since. About six thousand copies a year of them in various editions are sold in his native country alone, and the demand for them is so steady as to be a sort of index from year to year of the country's prosperity. In 1830 Macaulay entered Parliament, being helped to get a seat there by Lord Lansdowne, who did not know him, but was interested in him by reading his essay on Mill. The most famous of these essays on literary subjects are those on Addison, Milton, Bunyan, and Johnson. On historical subjects the best essays are on Hallam, Temple (thought the best of all by Morison), Pitt, Clive, and Warren Hastings. There are famous passages also in the essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes," and in that on Bacon.

21. Macaulay remained in Parliament through the great contest for reform in Parliament in 1832. His speeches made about that time on the passage of the great Reform Bill are very famous. In 1834 he received an honorable

and lucrative appointment in India. He here lived till 1838, doing excellent work for the government, and for himself reading enormously in the Greek and Latin classics, as was the habit of his life. He then returned to England in 1839 and re-entered political life as member of Parliament for Edinburgh. He continued to write at intervals, bringing out, among the other things which every school-boy knows, the "Lays of Ancient Rome," in 1842. He now began also in the intervals of political life to write his great "History of England." The first volumes of this appeared in 1848, followed by two more in 1855. This work may be called the most popular book of the sort ever printed in English. The publishers were able, in March of 1856, to pay him in one single check £20,000, for his share of the profits of one English edition. The number of editions of this great book is now quite beyond computation; and its sale still often exceeds that of the most popular novel of a year. It made him one of the most famous historians in Europe. But the plan of the work was so great that even with all his wonderful industry it was never finished. It remains, like a broken statue, just as the author left it at his death, not half completed according to his design.

22. Macaulay's political life was full of prosperity, checkered with less adversity than falls to the lot of most politicians. He lost his seat at Edinburgh, but was afterwards triumphantly re-elected. In 1839 he was a member of Lord Melbourne's government. In 1857 he was made Baron Macaulay of Rothley Temple. But the larger part of his interest lay always with his literary and historical work, upon which he labored, till, in 1859, he died, not unprepared by gradually failing health for that event, though it came to him at the early age of fifty-nine. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the Poets' Corner, near the statue of Addison. His "Life and Letters" has been

published by his nephew, Sir George Trevelyan. It is one of the best biographies ever written, and is much to be commended to the general reader who desires to know more of a noble man.

23. As to Macaulay's position in literature, the question may be said to be still undetermined. We wait for a thorough analysis of his work by the critics, and the critics wait for the final judgment of posterity. During his life he was esteemed even beyond measure by his countrymen. After his death came a sort of reaction against this popularity. The tide, however, seems to be setting again the other way. At any rate, no one has ever denied that his narrative power in history is unapproached. And, as Mr. Saintsbury says in his latest criticism of Macaulay, he is certainly a very great man of letters, and "an unsurpassed leader to reading."

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

“ To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous affairs.”—JOHN MILTON.

I. THE first object in the mind of the student of this book should be an intelligent reading of the essay on Milton, so as to obtain first of all what might be called a sense of the general structure of the work, and then some sufficient acquaintance with the more interesting details of it. By most readers this general reading may conveniently be done, allowing for due attention to hard words which must be looked up or explained, and for reading of necessary foot-notes, in four lessons, as follows: Lesson first, paragraphs one to twenty-five; lesson second, paragraphs twenty-five to forty-nine; lesson third, paragraphs forty-nine to seventy-two; lesson fourth, paragraphs seventy-two to the end. After finishing his first reading, the student may then go back to the Introduction and the Summary. If classwork in English is contemplated, the instructor may assist at these early processes of study by using the book from time to time as a text-book for question and answer. He may thus help the student to make sure that he is carrying away a sufficient idea of the subject-matter of the essay as a whole, as well as of the special topics handled in each section. An excellent exercise may be given to a class by requiring of the pupils a written summary in one or two sentences of the contents of each paragraph. Such summaries may be composed in class extempore or given from memory. Long summaries may likewise be

asked of the contents of each lesson, and of larger divisions of the essay.

II. But there is a second object, of even more importance than the acquisition of information about the contents of this essay on Milton. The value of any single bit of reading, or even the value of the whole group of books recommended for reading by the colleges, will be small if the work thus recommended does not bring suggestions to pupil and teacher of further reading of like books, and thus more and more stimulus, as the work proceeds, to the literary appetite of the young people who engage in it. To offer to teachers suggestions as to the best methods of encouraging this wider reading among their own pupils, and of keeping the whole matter of the English work in our schools as fresh and interesting as possible, would not be very useful or very proper in this place. But there are two or three things one may suggest which must certainly be considered by any teacher who uses Macaulay's books for school reading.

III. First, the pupil must have time and space enough given him for his English reading. He must not be oppressed with tasks in "reading" which cannot be accomplished in the hours at his command, and, on the other hand, he must not be allowed to shirk this work merely because it is not to be recited. Younger children must be followed up in the matter; their reading process itself must be watched and trained, if necessary. Children often make difficulties for themselves by misunderstanding the nature of such lessons, and attempting monstrous feats of memory-work, or else by reading without any perception of the sense. Time, opportunity, and some skill are needed for all work in English reading and writing, quite as much in the library as in the laboratory or studio.

Second, there must be at hand sufficient apparatus for the young worker. He ought to have access to a library

which will give him some freedom in reading and referring from one book to another. For example, in studying this essay the following books should be near :

(1) *On Milton*.—*Works*: “Milton’s Poetical Works,” 3 vols., edited by Masson (Macmillan); “Milton’s Prose Works,” 5 vols., Bohn’s Standard Library (Macmillan); “Milton’s Prose Works,” Henry Morley (Carisbrooke Library); “Milton’s Areopagitica,” Clarendon Press Series (Macmillan). *Biography and Criticism*: Mark Pattison’s “Milton,” English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan); Matthew Arnold’s “A French Critic on Milton,” in his “Mixed Essays” (Macmillan); Lowell’s “Milton,” in “Among my Books” (Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.).

(2) *On Macaulay*.—*Works*: “Essays,” and “History of England” (Longmans, Green, and Co., Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., and Tauchnitz); “Lays of Ancient Rome,” edited by Rolfe (Harper). *Biography and Criticism*: Trevelyan’s “Macaulay’s Life and Letters” (Longmans); Morison’s “Macaulay,” English Men of Letters Series (Macmillan); Morley’s “Macaulay,” in his “Collected Works” (Macmillan); Walter Bagehot’s “Macaulay,” in his “Miscellanies,” Vol. I. (Longmans); Leslie Stephen’s “Macaulay,” in his “Hours in a Library,” Third Series (Macmillan); “Macaulay,” in George Saintsbury’s “Corrected Impressions” (Heinemann); “Macaulay’s Place in English Literature,” by Frederic Harrison, *Forum*, September, 1894.

(3) *General Works*.—*Historical*: J. R. Green’s “Short History of the English People;” S. R. Gardiner’s “History of the Civil War” (Longmans); Lord Clarendon’s “History of the Civil War,” Selections by G. D. Boyle (Macmillan); Carlyle’s “Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches” (Houghton); Gardiner’s “Puritan Revolution,” Hale’s “Fall of the Stuarts,” McCarthy’s “Period of Reform,” Epochs of History Series (Longmans). *General*

Literature: "Divine Comedy," translated by C. E. Norton, 3 vols. (Houghton); Temple Shakespeare (Macmillan); Homer's "Odyssey," translated by Palmer (Houghton); Browning's "Belaustion's Adventure" and "Aristophanes' Apology" (Houghton). The list may be extended much further in this direction.

(4) *General Reference Books*.—An encyclopædia, preferably the "Encyclopædia Britannica;" the "Century Dictionary," especially the supplementary volume on names of persons and places; the "Dictionary of National Biography" of Stephen and Lee, a great but costly possession among such books; Ward's "English Poets" (Macmillan); Ploetz, "Epitome of Universal History," edited by Tillinghast; any good atlas, say, "Longmans' School Atlas," or Bartholomew's "Pocket Atlas."

Third, the pupil must be taught to work, and yet he must not be directed and controlled too much. It would no doubt be better if much of this English work could be left to the private life and the home influences of the pupil. It is a very important thing for a man or woman to know in early youth the satisfaction of planning and carrying on for oneself lines of study and reading suggested but not prescribed by one's regular public work. Even at school, still more at college and in after life, no one can succeed who cannot originate and carry out work for himself without the direction of any one. "No one ever rose above mediocrity, through the teaching of any one except himself." And then English literature is of all subjects most injured by the air of the schoolroom. Who does not know the difference between the books one discovers for himself in the benevolent atmosphere of home, or at the suggestion of sympathetic comrades, or, best of all, in some astonished moment, in the loneliness of a library, when some "new planet swims into his ken," as he has accidentally opened one of the world's great books, and the very

same books when one has seen them vivisected in a class-room by ever so clever and ever so intelligent a pedagogue ?

But teachers of the present day have taken possession of so much of children's time, and parents of the present day have kept control of so little, that a school now has duties to the general reading of children which may not be easily escaped. One duty a school can perform may be described as the encouraging of thoughtful reading in English, putting information from various sources together, and "getting ideas" out of books.

IV. No author will help a young mind, who is just beginning to care for the study of the human story, to come to the power of observing and reflecting upon books and men, and to the neat recording of his impressions, better than Macaulay. The clever proverbial "school-boy," who knew so many things, is a good type of the person whom Macaulay's work addresses in this regard most powerfully. For instance, let any pupil who reads this essay select some paragraphs which interest him. It may be that he will choose the paragraphs about Dante. Let him then take the phrases of the essay referring to Dante and look up the allusions in his reference-books. Let him perhaps make some written expanded accounts in place of the short notes he finds in print at the foot of these pages. Let him make new and additional notes. Let him add historical facts about Dante, Farinata, Beatrice, or little criticisms of his own upon the "Divine Comedy." This may lead in the end to much additional reading and information ; at any rate most wholesome habits are forming of turning things over in one's mind and combining one's new ideas with one's old intellectual possessions. Any school-boy who follows out in this fashion the lines of thought and reading suggested in a very few of Macaulay's essays, will find the circle of his acquaintance with history and literature, "the best that men have thought in the

world," is widening very fast and in a very interesting fashion.

V. Rhetorical analysis and criticism of Macaulay's work will be tempting. The teacher must be guided in this by his sense of what is due to the immaturity of his scholars, by the time at their command, and by the relations of the parts of their schoolwork to each other. Younger pupils may be drilled on the vocabulary of Macaulay, which is carefully chosen and accurately used. Older pupils will profit by a study of his skill in building paragraphs. The paragraph as a unit in meaning and in structure school-children seldom perceive in their reading, and as a consequence the paragraphing of children's letters and their school compositions is awkward and naïve. Macaulay can show any young writer what a paragraph is as few English writers can. As to the individual tricks of his style, his antitheses, his long and short alternating sentences, his climaxes, and his "stamping emphases," these things will be even too interesting to young readers, and a little notice of them is quite enough.

The following questions and topics are suggested for oral examinations, for rhetorical study, and for themes and compositions.

Oral Examination on the Essay. — Numerous questions should be asked in the class-room on parts of the essay previously assigned for the day's reading. Each teacher will naturally prefer to invent such questions for himself as the pupil seems to need, but the following specimens may make clearer the sort of work possible. For instance, on the first paragraph, the teacher may ask: 1. What was the date of the essay? In what journal did it first appear? What do you know of that Review? 2. What was the occasion of the composition of this essay? Title of the work discussed? 3. How many paragraphs are given by Macaulay to this review? Is this review favor-

able to the work of Milton, or not? Give in a few words an account of the contents of these paragraphs. 4. What happened to this book after Milton's death? 5. What does Macaulay mean by the "Popish Trials?" 6. What was the "Rye-house Plot?" etc., etc. Numbers of such questions will occur to anyone.

Study of Rhetoric.—There will be an advantage in treating a certain number of rhetorical topics in connection with Macaulay's English style. It may be studied by the pupils and results reported to the teacher, orally or in writing. Genung's "Rhetoric," or Adams Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric," will be of service in this pursuit. Subjects like these are suggested for study: 1. *The "Period" and the "Loose Sentence."* For typical Loose Sentences, see § 3, "It is, like all his Latin works," etc.; § 7, "The dexterous Capuchins," etc.; § 14, "Perhaps no person," etc.; § 20, "The public has long been," etc.; § 47, "They are simple," etc.; § 52, "He was not, in name and profession," etc.; and elsewhere. For Periods, see almost any paragraph; fine specimens are found in § 16, "As the light of knowledge," etc.; § 39, "The peculiar art," etc.; § 45, "Such as it was," etc.; § 46, "Hence it was," etc.; § 93, "Nor do we envy," etc. 2. *Climaxes.* See § 7, "by exhibiting some relic of him, a thread of his garment," etc.; § 7, "John Milton, the poet," etc.; § 38, "walking among men," etc.; § 45, "Of the great men," etc.; § 52, "all its worst vices," etc.; § 81, "For his sake empires had risen," to the end; and in many other places. 3. *Iterations of the same idea in many forms. Studied variety of wording.* Examples of this characteristic are too numerous to quote. See § 9, entire; § 21, especially the second sentence; § 53, entire; § 60, entire, noting especially the careful variation of the verbs. Compare with this § 23 entire. 4. *Repeated illustrations of a statement doing duty for proofs of its truth.* See in § 13 the illustrations of the statement that the "office

of the poet is to portray, not to dissect ;” or in §15, the expansion, by illustration, of the statement that, “in a rude state of society we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection.” See also § 26, “Euripides attempted to carry the reform further,” etc. ; § 21, “He does not paint,” etc. It will be a useful exercise for the pupils to determine in other places whether Macaulay is really adducing proofs or only making clear by illustration, or restating in various ways a proposition which needs proofs. 5. *Parallel construction.* See § 3, the sentences beginning, “The book itself,” “It is,” “There’s no imitation,” “The author,” “He,” etc. Notice the slight variations in the subject of each sentence. See also § 17, “He who” to “modern ruin.” Notice here that the same subject is maintained from sentence to sentence. See § 59, “Were they,” etc. ; § 61, “We charge,” etc. ; § 79, “The Puritans,” etc. Other instances of this mannerism of Macaulay’s will be easily found. 6. “*Particularity.*” See for a description in Macaulay’s own words of the literary effects produced by “particularity,” § 12. For examples see in § 6 the phrase, “dust and silence of the upper shelf,” used to convey the general idea of forgotten obscurity ; or § 83, “Dunstans, De Montforts,” etc., instead of some general phrases like “intolerant ecclesiastics, cruel persecutors,” etc. Examples may be found in many paragraphs. Compare also the effects of the figures of speech which follow. 7. *Metonymy.* See § 42, “Hindustan bows down to her idols ;” § 49, “roused Greece from slavery ;” § 86, “tasted the cup of Circe ;” and others. 8. *Metaphors.* See § 20, “innumerable reapers ;” § 49, “Oromasdes and Arimanes ;” § 49, “kindled a fire ;” § 89, “He never came up in the rear,” etc. ; § 89, “the torch of truth.” Metaphors are used in every paragraph in profusion. 9. *Similes and comparisons.* These are also too numerous to mention particularly. See for examples,

§ 12, "language, the machine of the poet;" § 16, "as a magic lantern;" § 19, "as the flower-pots of a hot-house;" § 22, "as Cassim;" § 24, "as atar of roses;" § 85, "like the Red-Cross Knights," etc., etc. 10. *Antithesis and pungent contrasts; Balanced expression.* This is the most marked characteristic of Macaulay's writing. See for specimens, § 8, "extol the poems, decry the poet;" § 15, entire; § 28, "He could stoop," to end; § 37, entire; § 60, entire; §§ 74, 75, entire; § 79, entire. The pupil may make his own selections to illustrate this mannerism of Macaulay. 11. *Epigram and Paradox; Exaggerated statement.* See § 10, "As civilization advances, poetry declines;" § 14, "Truth is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness;" § 46, entire; § 82, "The intensity of their feelings," etc.; 12. *Biblical cadences and phraseology.* See § 45, "Neither blindness," etc.; and in many other places, which the pupil may himself discover. 13. *Artistic alternations of long and short sentences.* See §§ 18, 43, 44, 59, 64, 84. 14. *Artistic inversions and interrogations.* § 19, "Never before," etc.; § 22, "No sooner," etc.; § 49, "Then were first proclaimed," etc.; §§ 57, 58, 59, for the interrogative form.

Many other rhetorical topics will occur to the student of the essay who examines it from this point of view.

Topics for compositions.—These may easily be drawn from the essay. Summaries may be asked, as described above; any of the foot-notes may be verified or expanded by the use of books of reference; or, for longer exercises, topics like some of the following may be given: 1. Character of the work reviewed in this essay, and its relations to Milton's life. 2. Macaulay's and Johnson's estimate of Milton. Which is more rational? 3. "As civilization advances, poetry declines." Does your knowledge of the classics and English literature lead you to believe this? Why are there no great poets to-day? 4. Compare the

“Lays of Ancient Rome” and “Chevy Chace.” 5. Describe the pictures roused in your imagination * by these lines from “Il Penseroso :”

“ Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto’s cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek ;
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride ;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.”

Or these, from the same poem :

“ I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar ;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removèd place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom ;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman’s drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere

* For the “magic” power of words on the imagination, to which Macaulay refers, see also Arnold’s *Essay on Celtic Literature*.

The spirit of Plato, to unfold
 What worlds or what vast regions hold
 The immortal mind that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook."

Or these, from "Lycidas :"

" Ay me ! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled ;
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
 Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
 Looks toward Numancos and Bayona's hold :
 Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth ;
 And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
 Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky."

Or these, from "Paradise Lost :"

" Nathless he so endured, till on the beach
 Of that inflamèd sea he stood, and called
 His legions—angel forms, who lay entranced
 Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
 In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades,
 High over-arched embower ; or scattered sedge
 Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
 Hath vexed the Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
 Buisiris and his Memphian chivalry,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursued
 The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 From the safe shore their floating carcasses
 And broken chariot-wheels. So thick bestrown,
 Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,
 Under amazement of their hideous change."

6. How is Milton's poetry affected by his admiration of the Greek Drama? 7. Description of the plot and persons of "Samson Agonistes." 8. The "Masque of Comus." 9. Outline the interview between Dante and Farinata. 10. Between Dante and Beatrice. 11. Test the accuracy of Macaulay's comparison of Milton and Dante, by comparing for yourself Lucifer in the last canto of the "Inferno," and Satan in the first book of "Paradise Lost." 12. Account for the effect of reality produced by Swift's narrative of "Gulliver's Travels," and Defoe's "Journal of the Plague Year." 13. Sketch Milton's life. 14. Sketch Dante's life (see Lowell's "Essay on Dante"). 14. Describe a portrait of Dante. 15. The Sonnets alluded to in § 47; describe the occasion of each, and criticise them. In what particulars do they resemble collects? Prove the truth of your statements by quotations. 16. "Oromasdes and Arimanes:" find similar uses of this metaphor in Macaulay's "Essay on Lord Byron," and again in his "Essay on Hallam;" explain in full. 17. The Principles of the Revolution of 1688. 18. Had Charles I. broken the fundamental laws of England? 19. Archbishop Laud. 20. "Strafford," by Robert Browning. 21. The Long Parliament. 22. Oliver Cromwell. 23. The Independents. 24. The freedom of the press is indispensable to political freedom. 25. The prose of Milton; how does it compare oratorically with Macaulay's prose? 26. A general criticism of Macaulay's essay on Milton. 27. A sketch of the life of Macaulay. 28. The reform of Parliament in 1832. 29. Macaulay's "History of England." 30. The changes of ministry in England from 1830 to 1859. 31. The part played by Zachary Macaulay in the abolition of slavery in England. 32. Macaulay's ways with children (see Trevelyan, Chapter XI.). 33. Macaulay's relations to his sisters (see Trevelyan, especially chapters III. and VI.).

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

MACAULAY'S LIFE AND WORKS.	CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.	CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHY.	ENGLISH LITERATURE.	AMERICAN LITERATURE.
1800. October 25, born at Rothley Temple.	1804. Napoleon Emperor. 1805. Trafalgar.	1800. Cowper died; Bancroft born. 1803. Newman born. 1806. Pitt died. 1807. Longfellow born. 1809. Holmes, Poe, Abraham Lincoln, Tennyson, Gladstone, Darwin born.	1800. Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent. 1802. <i>Edinburgh Review</i> founded. 1805. Cary, Translation of Dante. 1808. Marmion.	1809. Knickerbocker's History of New York.
1818. Goes to the University.	1812. Liverpool Ministry (Tory). 1814. Congress of Vienna. 1815. Waterloo; Holy Alliance founded. 1819. Bolivar, Dictator of Colombia. 1820. George IV.; Rising of Spanish Liberals; Revolutions in Portugal. 1821. Revolts in South America; Austrians crush Liberals in Italy; War of Grecian Independence opens.	1811. Thackeray born; Wendell Phillips born. 1812. Dickens born. 1818. Froude born. 1819. Ruskin, Lowell, Kingsley born. 1820. George Eliot born.	1811. Sense and Sensibility. 1812. Child Harold. 1814. Waverley.	1815. <i>North American Review</i> founded. 1817. Thanatopsis. 1819. The Sketch-Book. 1821. The Spy.
1823. <i>Knights Quarterly</i> founded. 1824. Fellow of Trinity. 1824. First Public Speech, before the Anti-slavery Meeting.	1821. Keats died. 1822. Shelley died; M. Arnold born. 1823. Parkman born. 1824. Byron died.	1820. Ivanhoe; Eve of St. Agnes. 1822. Essays of Elia.	1824. Tales of a Traveller.	

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE—Continued.

MACAULAY'S LIFE AND WORKS.	CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.	CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHY.	ENGLISH LITERATURE.	AMERICAN LITERATURE.
1825. Essay on Milton. 1826. Called to the bar. 1828. Commissioner of Bankruptcy. 1830. M. P. for Calne; Speech on Jewish Disabilities; Visit to Paris. 1832. Speeches on the Reform Bill; Board of Control; M. P. for Leoda.	1828. Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister (Tory). 1829. Catholic Emancipation. 1830. William IV.; July Revolution in Paris; Earl Grey, Prime Minister (Whig). 1832. Reform Bill 1833. Abolition of Slavery in English Possessions. 1834. Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister (Tory). 1835. Lord Melbourne, Prime Minister (Whig). 1837. Victoria.	1825. Huxley born. 1827. Canning died. 1828. George Meredith, D. G. Rossetti born. 1832. Scott died; Mackintosh died. 1833. Wilberforce died. 1834. Lamb died; Coleridge died. 1838. Zachary Macaulay died. 1840. Lord Holland died.	1825. The Talisman. 1826. Woodstock. 1827. Keble's Christian year. 1836-37. Pickwick Papers. 1841. Pippa Passes.	1825. Everett, Orator at Concord; Webster, First Bunker Hill Orator. 1831. Garrison founded the <i>Liberator</i> . 1834. Bancroft, History of the United States, Vol. I. 1836. Holmes, Poems. 1837. Prescott, Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella; Hawthorne, Twice-told Tales; Emerson, <i>ΦΒΚ</i> oration, The American Scholar; Whittier, Poems. 1839. Longfellow, <i>Voices of the Night</i> ; Hyperton. 1841. Emerson, <i>Essays</i> .
1838. Return to Europe; Tour on the Continent. 1839. M. P. for Edinburgh; Secretary of War. 1841. Parliament dissolved; Re-election for Edinburgh; Essay on Warren Hastings. 1842. <i>Lays of Ancient Rome</i> ; Speech on the Copyright Question.	1841. Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister (Tory).			

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE—Continued.

MACAULAY'S LIFE AND WORKS.	CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.	CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHY.	ENGLISH LITERATURE.	AMERICAN LITERATURE.
1843. Essays republished in book form. 1844. Tour in Holland. 1845. Second Essay on Chatham; Speech on Maynooth; Writing of the History begun.	1846. Repeal of the Corn laws; Lord John Russell, Prime Minister (Whig).		1843. Modern Painters, Vol. I. 1844. Elizabeth Barrett's Poems.	
1846. Paymaster - General; Re-election for Edinburgh. 1847. Parliament Dissolved; Defeated for Edinburgh.	1848. Revolution in Paris; Uprisings in Italy, Germany, and Hungary.		1847. Vanity Fair.	1847. Evangeline.
1848. First two volumes of the History published. 1852. Re-election for Edinburgh; Health begins to fail. 1855. Third and fourth volumes of the History.	1852. Lord Derby, Prime Minister (Tory); Lord Aberdeen, Prime Minister (Whig).	1850. Wordsworth died; Peel died; Jeffrey died. 1852. Daniel Webster died; Moore died.		1848. Lowell, Biglow Papers. 1849. Parkman, Oregon Trail. 1850. The Scarlet Letter. 1851. The House of Seven Gables. 1852. Uncle Tom's Cabin. 1853-59. Irving, Life of Washington. 1856. Motley, Dutch Republic. 1858. Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, Miles Standish.
1856. Resigns from Parliament. 1853-9. Articles in Encyclopædia Britannica. 1857. Becomes Baron Macaulay of Rothley Temple. 1859. December 28, death at Holly Lodge.	1854. Crimean War. 1855. Lord Palmerston Prime Minister (Whig). 1858. Lord Derby, Prime Minister (Tory).	1855. Rogers died. 1859. Irving, Prescott, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt died.	1859. Origin of Species.	

ESSAY ON MILTON

(*Edinburgh Review*, August, 1825.)

*Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi.*¹ *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON, translated from the original by Charles R. Sumner, M.A., etc., etc. 1825.²

1. TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon,³ deputy keeper of the state papers, in the course of his researches among the presses⁴ of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton while he filled the

§§ 1-8. PREFATORY REMARKS. *Description of a theological work by John Milton, lately discovered.*

¹ Literally, Two Posthumous Books of John Milton, Englishman, on Christian Doctrine. Milton's title originally intended for it was probably *Idea Theologiæ* or "A Body of Divinity."

² Published in two editions Latin and English, by Dr. Sumner. Both are now rare books. The English version, re-edited by J. A. St. John, is to be found in Bohn's Standard Library, *Milton's Prose Works*, Vols. IV., V.

³ Robert Lemon, F.S.A., noted for other discoveries among the state papers. See Appendix to Scott's *Rob Roy*. Until the beginning of this century the English state papers were much neglected and carelessly kept. Since Mr. Lemon's time, however, they have been carefully studied and calendared. All such records are now kept in the Record-Office under the special charge of the Master of the Rolls through the deputy-keeper of the Records. For some adventures of the English state papers, see *Stories from the State-Paper Office*, A. C. Ewald (Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1882).

⁴ Repositories for documents.

office of Secretary,¹ and several papers relating to the Popish Trials² and the Rye-house Plot.³ The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed *To Mr. Skinner, Merchant*. On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost *Essay on the Doctrines of Christianity*, which, according to Wood and Toland,⁴ Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament,⁵ and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.⁶

¹ See Introduction, 16.

² Arising from the bogus Popish Plot invented by Dr. Titus Oates, 1678. Among other extraordinary lies Dr. Oates testified that "the late John Milton" had been a member of a treasonable Papist Club in London!

³ The Whig conspiracy to assassinate Charles II. in 1683. See Introduction, 19.

⁴ Anthony à Wood (1632-1695), in his *History of Oxford University (Athenæ Oxonienses, 1691)*, gives a life of Milton, who took the Master's degree there in 1635. This life is based largely upon notes furnished by one Aubrey, a contemporary of Milton, who knew some of his family and friends very well and drew from them much information. John Toland (1670-1722), the Deist, wrote an early *Life of Milton*, published in 1698.

⁵ A Parliament summoned to Oxford by Charles II. in 1681. See Introduction, 19.

⁶ The adventures of this manuscript are now better known than when this paragraph was written. After the publication of Macaulay's *Essay*, more documents were found by Mr. Lemon and others, showing that Mr. Daniel Skinner, a nephew of Cyriac, had been employed under Milton's own direction in preparing this manuscript for

2. Mr. Sumner,¹ who was commanded by His Majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task in a manner honourable to his talents and to his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant²; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

3. The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written—though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cambridge.³ There is no elaborate imitation of

publication. It was to be published after Milton's death, which occurred in 1674 during the preparation of the book for the press. In 1675, accordingly, Mr. Skinner tried to get it printed, along with certain public letters written by Milton as Secretary of the Commonwealth, at the press of Elzevir in Amsterdam. The printer, Daniel Elzevir, looked over the manuscript, and was so alarmed by its contents that he notified the English government, saying that "there were many things in it which ought to be suppressed." The government thereupon obliged the Skinners to give the manuscript up. It was then thrown aside among other old papers until it was found one hundred and fifty years afterwards, as described above.

¹ Afterwards Lord Bishop of Winchester; at this time Royal Chaplain and Librarian. "His Majesty" is George the Fourth.

² Notice Macaulay's careful use throughout the essay of this word, which is often abused in common speech.

³ Oxford and Cambridge, the two great English universities, have maintained in England a high standard in Latin style by encouraging prize compositions in prose and verse. Although Macaulay was himself an excellent classical scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, we learn from his biography that Latin composition was never a very attractive exercise to him. "I never practised composition," he says in a letter, "a single hour since I have been at Cambridge." He is therefore a little scornful here about these prize essays; in fact, as we learn from his nephew, other men of his time wrote better Latin than he did.

classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees.¹ The author does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian² gloss and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

“That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.”³

But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother-tongue; and where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. What Denham,⁴ with great felicity, says of Cowley,⁵ may be applied to

¹ The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews noted for their overzealous care about outward forms of religion, to the neglect of inward virtue of heart and soul. See *Gospel of St. Matthew*, Chap. xxiii. Even so the Latin essays of the English universities were beautiful outwardly but had no valuable contents.

² Like Cicero, the great Roman orator (106-43 B.C.), whose name is a proverb for the best Latin prose ever composed.

³ *E.g.*, *praedestinatio, electio nationalis, reprobatio*, etc. This line is from Milton's *Sonnet XI*. Quintilian (35-96 A.D.) was a famous Roman teacher of Rhetoric. In his work upon *The Education of the Orator* he discusses many points of interest in Latin diction and style. His own taste was very careful and his admiration of Cicero's Latin was great.

⁴ Sir John Denham (see Ward's *English Poets*), a poet and courtier of the reign of Charles I. In some lines on the *Death and Burial of Mr. Abraham Cowley among the ancient Poets*, he says:—

“Horace's wit and Virgil's state
He did not steal but emulate;
And when he would like them appear,
Their garb but not their clothes did wear.”

⁵ Abraham Cowley, the most popular poet of Milton's day; one of the great men of Macaulay's own college (Trinity College, Cambridge). He wrote many translations and imitations of classic authors, as well

him. He wears the garb but not the clothes of the ancients.¹

4. Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth. He professes to form his system from the Bible alone ; and his digest² of scriptural texts is certainly among the best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

5. Some of the heterodox³ opinions which he avows seem to have excited considerable amazement ; particularly his Arianism,⁴ and his notions on the subject of polygamy.⁵ Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of the former ; nor do we think that any reader, acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting

as English odes and prose essays. In politics he took the royalist side with Lord Falkland. Macaulay wrote a charming *Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton* for *Knights Quarterly* in 1823, which anticipates some of the paragraphs in this present essay, and might well be read in connection with it.

¹ *I.e.*, his ideas are clothed in the general form which the ancients would have used ; but not in exactly the same words and phrases.

² Digest, a collection and abridgment of literary or scientific matter arranged in some convenient order.

³ Heterodox, heretical, theologically incorrect.

⁴ The theological tenets, upon the nature of Christ, of Arius, an Alexandrian priest of the fourth century. After a fierce battle in the church, these opinions were condemned as heresy by the General Council of Nicæa, 325 A.D. Milton, like Sir Isaac Newton, appears to be a semi-Arian, believing that Christ possessed a certain derivative deity, not, however, coeternal with the Father's.

⁵ Milton maintains in his essay that, according to the Old Testament, marriage under polygamy was a genuine marriage. Polygamy, therefore, though it may be inexpedient, is not a crime like murder and stealing.

3. ✓ the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter,¹ and the observation of the Sabbath,² might, we think, have caused more just surprize.

6. But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox, or far more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted³ or perverted by quartos.⁴ A few more days, and this essay will follow the *Defensio Populi*⁵ to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

7. We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins⁶ never choose to preach on the life

¹ "Matter is imperishable and eternal, because it is not only from God, but out of God," who is eternal. Milton would be classed now as a pantheistic materialist. He appears to hold that there is no radical distinction between body and soul, or between matter and spirit.

² "The command to keep the Sabbath was given to the Israelites for a variety of reasons, mostly peculiar to themselves;" "the law of the Sabbath having been repealed, it is evident that no day of worship has been appointed in its place," etc., etc. Milton is an Anti-Sabbatarian.

³ Convert, to turn from one opinion to another; pervert, to turn from a true opinion to a false one.

⁴ Books in the making of which the large sheets of printing paper are folded twice, making four leaves. The book Macaulay is reviewing was a quarto. This shape was a favorite form for important books in Milton's day. It is now little used except for books containing plates and maps like school geographies.

⁵ See Introduction, 16.

⁶ A younger branch of the Franciscan monks, named from the pecul-

and miracles of a saint, till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors, by exhibiting some relic of him—a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.¹

8. It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilised world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the

iar cowl or *capuce* they wear. They are famous as preachers, as missionaries, and as martyrs.

§§ 8-49. FIRST DIVISION OF THE ESSAY: MILTON'S POETRY.

§§ 8-18. *First topic discussed: Is Milton's place among the greatest masters? Yes, for he triumphed over the difficulty of writing poetry in the midst of a highly civilised society. A discussion of the relation of poetry to civilisation.*

¹ This sentence describes accurately the general subject of the essay. The essay is not a complete analysis of Milton's literary product, nor an elaborate biographical study. It is just a *Commemoration of the genius and virtues of John Milton*, with a general discussion of some of his moral and intellectual qualities.

author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilisation, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions for these advantages.

9. We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical¹ as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavourable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson² has thought fit to make him the butt of his clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilisation which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

10. We think that, as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold

¹ Paradox, an apparently absurd but true statement.

² Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the dictator of literary opinion to the England of his time. The allusion is to his *Life of Milton* in his *Lives of the Poets*. On this subject Johnson says in this work that Milton was a "victim to the fumes of vain imagination" in that he thought he depended on seasons and climates; Johnson assures us that, however inferior to the heroes of better ages, "he might still be great among his contemporaries." "a giant among pygmies." For the relations of Johnson's *Life* to Macaulay's *Essay*, see Introduction, 4, 5, and 6.

that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilised age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox¹ article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phænomenon² indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

11. The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits it, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's³ little dialogues on Political Economy, could teach Montague⁴ or Wal-

¹ Orthodox, correct theologically ; hence, correct in general.

² Now usually spelled phenomenon ; "a thing appearing," something whose appearing requires explanation.

³ Mrs. Marcet wrote a text-book for children called *Conversations on Political Economy*. The conversation is carried on by Mrs. B., who expounds the principles of Adam Smith, Malthus, Say, and Sismondi, to Caroline, who asks the questions "which would be likely to arise in the mind of an intelligent young person." A letter of Maria Edgeworth's, written from the house of Mr. Ricardo in 1822, says: "It is now high fashion with blue ladies to talk political economy and make a great jabbering on the subject, while others who have more sense, like Mrs. Marcet, hold their tongues and listen."

⁴ Charles Montague (1661-1715), afterwards Earl of Halifax ; like Cowley a graduate of Trinity College ; an intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton. He became famous as Chancellor of the Exchequer under

pole¹ many lessons in finance. (Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton² knew after half a century of study and meditation.

12. But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

13. This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalisation is necessary to the advancement of knowledge, but particularly is indispensable to the creations of the imagination.

William III. for his extraordinary skill in finance. Under his advice and guidance the Bank of England was founded, and he took the measures also which began the national debt of England. See Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. vii., chap. xix.

¹ Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745), the great finance minister of George II., who developed especially the excise duties. His policy was devoted to preserving peace abroad and establishing principles of sound finance and of economical taxation at home.

² Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), another Fellow of Trinity, an unrivalled genius in mathematical speculation. His most famous book was entitled *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. His great discoveries were in optics, in gravitation, and in the invention of mathematical processes. See Hawthorne's *True Stories* for a little biography of this famous man.

In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyse human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury.¹ He may refer all human actions to self-interest like Helvetius,² or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lacrymal³ glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe,⁴

¹ The third Lord Shaftesbury (1671-1713), an amiable and shy young man, for whom public-school life was too rough, and who therefore learned his Greek from Eliza Birch by the "natural method." His fame as a writer is chiefly due to a book on human actions entitled *Characteristics*. He maintains that men have a special sense which sees right and wrong as the eye sees light. He invented for this the term "moral sense," which phrase he may be said to have contributed to the English language.

² Helvetius (1715-1771), a popular philosopher in Parisian society about a generation before the French Revolution. He was a curious person, so vain of popular applause that he appeared once as a stage-dancer. His chief work, entitled *De l'Ésprit (On the Human Mind)*, maintained that self-interest was the spring of all human action, that there was no such thing as right and wrong apart from what is pleasant and painful. This, he says, is "Le secret de tout le monde." His book made a great stir, incurring even the notice of the Sorbonne and the Parliament of Paris.

³ Lacrymal, secreting tears.

⁴ In Greek mythology a queen whose pride in her children led her to make impious comparisons of them to Apollo and Artemis, the children of Latona. Her children were therefore slain by the arrows of these gods, while Niobe, after vainly trying to defend them, became changed into a rock, weeping forever.

or the blushes of his Aurora.¹) If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the Fable of the Bees. But could Mandeville² have created an Iago?³ Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man—a real, living, individual man?

14. Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean, not, of course, all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. (By poetry we mean, the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours.) Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigour and felicity of their diction, and

¹ Aurora, the goddess of dawn, always rosy and blushing, according to Greek and Latin poetic fancy.

² Bernard de Mandeville (1670–1733), a satirical writer. *The Fable of the Bees* appeared in 1705. The moral of the fable is that it is the selfishness and extravagance, and even the vices of society, which make the market for labor. Thus luxury is the root of all civilisation, and “Private Vices, Publick Benefits.” The fable narrates that certain Bees left their busy hive and went off to live a frugal life in a hollow tree, where by their injudicious temperance and virtue they all starved.

“ . . . Fools only strive
To make a great, an honest hive.”

³ A principal character in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, a famous villain.

still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled :

✓ “ As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”¹

These are the fruits of the “ fine frenzy ” which he ascribes to the poet—a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. (Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry ; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just ; but the premises² are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent ; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence, of all people, children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility³ may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear,⁴ as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet, in spite of her knowledge, she believes ; she weeps, she trembles ; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.)

¹ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V., Sc. I.

² Premises, a term in logic ; better “ premisses.” It means a proposition, belief in which leads to belief in another proposition called a conclusion.

³ In current English we are apt to use “ sensitiveness ” instead of “ sensibility,” in this meaning of “ capacity for acute feeling.” But notice the title of Jane Austen's novel, *Sense and Sensibility*.

⁴ Shakespeare's well-known plays.

15. (In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief.) The Greek Rhapsodists, according to Plato, could not recite Homer without almost falling into convulsions.¹ The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death-song.² The power which the ancient bards³

¹ Plato's *Ion*, pp. 535, 536. Socrates says to Ion, who was a Rhapsodist, or professional reciter of poetry, "When you produce your great effects, in the recitation of some striking passage, are you in your right mind? Does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons and places of which she is speaking?"—"Yes," says Ion, "I must confess that at the tale of pity my eyes are filled with tears, and when I speak of heroes my hair stands on end and my heart beats."—"Strictly speaking such a one is not in his right mind." Plato (429-347 B.C.), the great Athenian philosopher, views poets exactly as Macaulay does here, as beings of an abnormal structure akin to mania. "Poets are winged and holy things," he says, "not be allowed to live in a well ordered state."

² Mohawks, a tribe of Indians in what is now the State of New York. They were the first tribe of this region to obtain firearms, and they were so conspicuous in the history of the early settlers that their name was used by the English for the Iroquois in general, and therefore became a proverbial expression for the fiercest Indians.

³ A Celtic word for the national poets in Wales and Ireland. These singers of the deeds of heroes, of victories of the nation and tribe, and chanters of pedigrees, continue to be found in historic times.

of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilised community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

16. Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which it calls up, grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

17. He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man, or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time¹ great talents, intense labour, and long meditation, employed in

¹The allusion here is probably to the poets of the "Lake School," especially to Wordsworth, whose effort to abandon the lofty diction which had grown fashionable in English poetry, and to return in his verses to the simple language of life's simple feelings was at first very offensive to his contemporaries. The *Lyrical Ballads* came out in 1798.

this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

18. If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education. He was a profound and elegant classical scholar; he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical¹ literature; he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived.² He was perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch³ was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination; nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson⁴ is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan⁵ elegance, and was as ill quali-

§§ 18-20. *Second topic: Milton's Latin Poetry.*

¹ Jewish writings composed chiefly after the Christian era by the Rabbis or masters expounding the law. They enjoyed an authority almost equal to that of the sacred Scriptures.

² Milton read not only Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, but also French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish.

³ Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), the first true reviver of classical learning in Europe after the middle ages. He wrote a Latin epic, *Africa*, and was crowned with a laurel wreath for it in Rome. He wrote also Latin eclogues and epistles. His Latin was, however, mediæval; he was devoted to the ideal of restoring classic Latin to the world, but he had little direct knowledge of classic authors himself.

⁴ See Introduction, 6.

⁵ The Augustan age was the time of the Emperor Augustus, when Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Livy, and other great Roman writers lived.

fied to judge between two Latin styles, as a habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

19. Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are, in general, as ill-suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hothouse to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the Epistle to Manso¹ was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton, the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved; while, at the same time, the richness of his fancy and the elevation of his sentiments give to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

“ About him exercised heroic games
The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
Celestial armoury, shield, helm, and spear,
Hung bright, with diamond flaming and with gold.”²

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination tri-

The word became proverbial for any epoch when good taste prevailed in literature.

¹ Manso, Marquis of Villa, was the great man of Naples when Milton visited it. The old man was very kind to the young poet, making much of him and introducing him to other literary people. For this Milton wrote him on his return a beautiful epistle in Latin hexameters, one of his best-known Latin poems. See Introduction, 11.

² *Paradise Lost*, IV., 551-554.

umphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of its fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.¹

20. It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal, and no parodist² to degrade, which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic³ powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

21. The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses as by what it suggests, not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors.⁴ The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion ;

¹ For Milton's Latin Poems, see Milton's Poems in the edition of Masson, 3 vols. (Macmillan). Perhaps the best of them all is the *Epitaphium Damonis*, dedicated to his friend, Charles Diodati.

² Parodist, a writer of ludicrous imitations of poetry.

³ Idiomatic, peculiar to a certain language.

⁴ As electricity is carried to any remote place by a good conductor, so Milton's vocabulary brings ideas from a vast distance into the mind of the reader.

but takes the whole upon himself, and sets his images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. (He does not paint a finished picture or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the keynote, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.)

22. We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing, but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult¹ power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present, and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonym for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it, would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying: "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame!"² The miserable failure of Dryden,³ in his attempt to rewrite some parts of the *Paradise Lost*, is a remarkable instance of this.

§§ 20-25. *Third topic: Some striking characteristics of Milton's poetic methods. A description of the effect produced by the peculiar suggestiveness of the words he uses. Examples, L' Allegro, and Il Penseroso.*

¹ Occult, concealed, "where more is meant than meets the ear."

² In old versions of the *Arabian Nights* was included a famous Turkish tale, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." "Sesame" is a kind of grain.

³ John Dryden (1631-1700), the great poet of the next generation in England. He composed an opera called *The State of Innocence*,

23. In support of these observations, we may remark that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known, or more frequently repeated, than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names.¹ They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant country. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists,² the embroidered housings,³ the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

of which the libretto was manufactured out of *Paradise Lost*. Here are some verses :

“ If thou art he, but O, how changed from him,
Companion of my Arms, how wan, how dim,
How faded all thy glories are ! I see
Myself too well, and my own change in thee.”

Milton is said to have given Dryden leave to do this work, saying, good-naturedly, “ Ay, ay, you may tag my verses.” A “tag” was a silver ornament worn on the ends of ribbons in those days for show. Milton’s allusion is to the tinkling rhymes on the ends of Dryden’s verses.

¹ Specimens of these “muster-rolls of names” are found in *Paradise Lost*, I., 580-585; II., 525-545; IV., 276-282; and elsewhere.

² Lists, the space enclosed by the ropes or barriers at a tournament. Trophied, adorned with trophies, the spoils taken from conquered enemies.

³ Housings, the trappings of the horses, especially cloths or covers, more or less ornamental, laid over the saddle.

24. In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as *atar*¹ of roses differs from ordinary rose water, the close packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.²

25. The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. They are both lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode.³ The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter, or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron⁴ were his least successful performances.

§§ 25-30. *Fourth topic: Milton's dramatic poetry. Like the Greek drama, it has much of the lyric character. The Greek drama and Samson Agonistes; Comus and the Italian musques.*

¹ *Atar* of roses, usually written "attar," "otto"; an essential oil of roses made in Turkey. It takes one hundred and fifty pounds of rose-leaves to make an ounce of the *atar*.

² Macaulay wrote "canto" in the first edition. A stanza is a series of lines grouped together in a fixed order, composing a part of a poem. A canto is a much larger thing, a division of some length in a long poem.

³ Lyric, delineating the poet's own thoughts and feelings. Drama, a story of passions and feelings not belonging to the poet, conveyed by action and representation of persons. Ode, a lyric poem of the most exalted kind, expressing the highest feelings of the poet.

⁴ Byron (1788-1824) was reviewed in the *Edinburgh* in 1830 by Ma-

They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery, in which a single movable head goes round twenty different bodies; so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold¹ were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

26. Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavored to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek Drama, on the model of which the *Samson* was written, sprang from the Ode. The dialogue was engrafted on the chorus,² and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. *Æschylus*³ was,

caulay. The idea here expressed about Byron is in that paper expanded and explained.

¹ Byron's first and best-known poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, describes in the character of the hero his own melancholy spirit journeying over Europe.

² The Greek Drama was evolved from choruses sung by bands of dancing villagers around the altars of harvest gods. During these hymns they imitated the actions of the gods and heroes which their songs described. Afterwards a narrator and actor joined in dialogue with them. Finally several actors and a regular stage were introduced and the Drama was thus created. But, as Macaulay says, the dramatic element was to the end subordinated to the lyric.

³ *Æschylus* (525-456 B.C.), the first of the three great Greek tragedians. As to the "Oriental tincture" in his poetry, it cannot be true that he borrowed anything from Asia. Rather was his spirit a kindred one to that of the Orient, for in common with the poets and prophets of the Hebrew race he had a deep sense of the mystical meaning human life, while in common with the Greek race he could expr

-head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus,¹ it should seem that they still looked up with the veneration of disciples to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is clearly discernible in the works of Pindar² and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The Book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd: considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytaemnestra to Agamemnon on his return,³ or the description of the seven Argive chiefs,⁴ by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But, if we forget the character of his ideas under beautiful plastic forms. Milton resembles Æschylus in his fondness for imagining vast incorporeal personages and allegorical beings.

¹ Herodotus (484-424 B.C.), one of the earliest writers of Greek History. He depicts, as in a drama, the evolution of the struggle, centuries old, between Asia and Europe for control of the Mediterranean world. His history culminates in the victory of Greece at Marathon and Salamis. In the course of his work he has much to say in long digressions upon Egypt and Assyria.

² Pindar (522-443 B.C.) writer of odes, chiefly in honor of victors at various sacred national games.

³ In the greatest play of Æschylus, called the *Agamemnon*, translated into English by Robert Browning (*Aristophanes' Apology*) and by Edward Fitzgerald (*The Agamemnon*).

⁴ In the *Seven Chiefs against Thebes*, telling how in the quarrel of the house of Cadmus for the sovereignty of Thebes, that city was besieged by seven Argive champions.

ters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of painting, but of a bas-relief. It suggests a resemblance, but it does not produce an illusion.¹ Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.²

27. Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly—much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved. Indeed the caresses which this partiality leads him to bestow on “sad Electra’s poet,”³ sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairyland kissing the long ears of Bottom.⁴ At all events, there can be no doubt

¹ Sophocles (495–406 B.C.), the second and greatest of the Greek tragedians. He excelled in sharp and delicate character-drawing; and he knew, in spite of tragedy’s “sceptred pall,” how to exhibit the complexities of human life as it is. Of course all his work was done under the traditions of the Greek stage. The Greek drama is always suggestive of sculpture rather than of painting; it aims at symmetry, rhythm, and equipoise, rather than at vivacity and color. The art of Sophocles in particular is characterized by a refined and balanced perfection wrought quietly out in harmonious and beautiful details. But it is quite too much to say that it “does not produce an illusion.”

² Euripides (480–406 B.C.), the third of the Greek tragedians. Macaulay modified this unfavorable judgment of Euripides in his later years. He wrote in his copy of Euripides in 1835, “I can hardly account for the contempt which I felt, at school and college, for Euripides. I own I like him better now than Sophocles.” But there is some justice nevertheless in these strictures on the art of Euripides. In trying to adapt the form of Greek tragedy to the representation of scenes from life Euripides overpassed the limits of possibility.

³ See Milton’s *Sonnet VIII*.

⁴ See Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act iv., Sc. 1.

that his veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had he taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent, he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali¹ mixed, neutralize each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

28. The *Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian Masque,² as the *Samson* is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the *Faithful Shepherdess* as the *Faithful Shep-*

¹ Two groups of substances of which each group possesses the quality of destroying the characteristic chemical properties of the members of the other group.

² A Masque or mask, a form of dramatic spectacle much in vogue in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It contained spoken verse, music, and dancing. "The origin of the dramatic masque of the sixteenth century has been traced by antiquaries as far back as the time of Edward III. But in its perfected shape it was a genuine offspring of the English Renaissance, a cross between the English mystery-play and the Greek drama." As the taste for open-air pageant died out, masques yielded to operas, their modern equivalent. They flourished most in the reigns of Henry VIII., Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I.

herdess is to the *Aminta*, or the *Aminta* to the *Pastor Fido*.¹ It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day.² Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.³

29. Milton attended in the *Comus* to the distinction which he neglected in the *Samson*. He made his *Masque* what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded

¹ *The Faithful Shepherdess*, by John Fletcher (1579-1625), the literary partner of Beaumont. "It is a lyric poem, in semi-dramatic shape, to be judged only as such, and as such almost faultless." Swinburne. The *Aminta* is by Tasso (1544-1595). The *Pastor Fido* is by Guarini (1537-1612). These three pastoral dramas are all of about the same date, depicting the loves of swains and shepherdesses.

² See Charles Lamb's essay on Chimney-sweepers, *Essays of Elia*. May-day was the great holiday for the poor little wretches, who were forced in Macaulay's youth to climb up the inside of English chimneys to clean out the soot. They went about decorated on this day with ribbons and garlands.

³ Crucible, a vessel or melting pot for chemical tests. The word is connected with "crock, crockery."

wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton,¹ in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique² delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to you I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labor of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds³ of Thyrsis,⁴ he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly—

"Now my task is smoothly done
I can fly or I can run,"

¹ Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639), a wit and scholar of James the First's court. Admired and trusted by the King, he might have had high place in English history had he been willing to become one of the courtiers and advisers of James. But he chose pleasanter paths of literary and political life. He was made at his own request ambassador to Venice, as he said, "to tell lies for the good of his country." He was promoted thence to be Provost of Eton, becoming a neighbor and friend of Milton. See Walton's *Lives* for a beautiful account of him.

² Greek pastoral poetry was written in Doric Greek of Sicily. Hence "Doric" means "pastoral or rural in sound." "The tragical part" means simply the dialogue.

³ An old Saxon word for a garment, now disused except in the phrase "widow's weeds."

⁴ Thyrsis, a name for shepherds in Greek pastoral poetry. The verses are lines 1012, 1013 of *Comus*.

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian¹ dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia,² which the musky wings of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.³

30. There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks.⁴ Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the *Paradise Regained*, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of that parental affection which men of letters bear towards the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the *Paradise Lost*, we must readily admit.⁵ But we are sure that the superiority of the *Paradise Lost* to the *Paradise Regained* is not more decided than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to

§§ 30-47. *Fifth topic: Paradise Lost. Parallel between Milton and Dante. A discussion of Milton's superiority in the management of the agency of supernatural beings.*

¹ Elysium, the abode of the blessed, according to Greek mythology. All these pretty phrases are quoted from the same song in *Comus*, vss. 774 to the end.

² "All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia." *Psalms* xlv. 8. Milton's phrases are often culled from the English Bible.

³ Hesperides, daughters of Hesperus, who dwell in some mysterious earthly paradise, lying in the unknown West (in Greek, Hesperos).

⁴ Macaulay dismisses in this little sentence *Lycidas*, and the great *Ode on the Nutcracker*, without further allusion, together with a large number of other interesting short poems. The student of Milton must be prepared to supplement Macaulay's essay with many other books. See *Suggestions for Teachers and Students*, iii. (2).

⁵ There is no evidence that Milton thought this work superior to *Paradise Lost*. His nephew, Philips, simply says that when people said it was inferior, "he could not hear with patience any such thing related to him." It is a short poem of three books, telling very simply of Christ's temptation.

every poem which has since made its appearance. But our limits prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

31. The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*.¹ The subject of Milton in some points resembled that of Dante ; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan² literature.

32. The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics³ of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves : they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque⁴ may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste ; he counts the

¹ The English name by which Dante's great poem is known. Dante called it *Commedia*, because the ending is not tragical. His admirers called it "Divine."

² Dante was a citizen of Florence of Tuscany, and was the first famous writer in the native Italian of that land.

³ The picture-writing of the Indians is always a rude representation of the thing signified. Even so Dante represents things directly. But the Egyptian hieroglyphics represent words or syllables, or it may be letters only. So Milton's words suggest ideas remote from themselves, and his descriptions are not intelligible unless you know the inner meanings of his words.

⁴ Grotesque, "found in a grotto ;" fantastic, like the grotto-work of the Renaissance. Compare "antic," like the antique.

numbers ; he measures the size. (His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner, not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn, not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem, but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell¹ were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent.² The cataract of Phlegethon³ was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict.⁴ The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.⁵

33. Now, let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage, the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mis-

¹ Dante's poem represents him as descending, circle after circle, round the sides of the pit of hell. In each round he meets different scenes of punishment arranged for different sorts of crime, the lowest being the worst.

² The Adige, a foaming mountain torrent, full of wild bowlders, running between the lofty hills of the Brenner pass. On it stands the city of Trent.

³ "The Fire-river," one of the streams of the under-world in Greek myth.

⁴ Near Naples.

⁵ Arles is in France, near the mouth of the Rhone. "As at Arles, where the Rhone stagnates, sepulchres make all the places uneven ; so did they here. . . . Among the tombs flames were scattered. All their lids were lifted and dire laments were issuing forth."—*Inferno*, Canto IX.

takes for an island.¹ When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe² or Atlas;³ his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod.⁴ "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball⁵ of St. Peter's at Rome, and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans⁶ would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation⁷ is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

34. Once more, compare the lazar-house⁸ in the eleventh book of the *Paradise Lost* with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery—Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance; Death shaking his dart over

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Book I., verse 194; Book IV., verse 985.

² The Peak of Teneriffe is on the largest of the Canary Islands, off the coast of Africa. It is 12,200 feet high. Atlas is a mountain in Morocco, more than 12,000 feet high. ³ *Inferno*, Canto XXXI.

⁴ The "pine cone" of bronze, from the Mausoleum of Hadrian, in Dante's time stood in the fore court of St. Peter's. It is now in the Vatican Garden. "Ball" is a mistranslation.

⁵ "Frieslanders," supposed to be very tall.

⁶ Cary's translation remains the standard poetical translation of the *Divine Comedy*. For students the prose translation of Charles Eliot Norton (3 vols., octavo. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) is rather to be commended.

⁷ Lazar-house, Italian lazaretto, a hospital for those diseased, named for Lazarus in the parable.

⁸ *Paradise Lost*, Book XI., verse 567; *Inferno*, Canto XXIX. "Malebolge is a place in Hell, all of stone, and of an iron color."—Canto XVIII.

them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia,¹ were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

35. We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each, in his own department, is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has, wisely or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The *Divine Comedy*² is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death,³ who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope,⁴ who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon,⁵ who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo.⁶ His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer.⁷ His own feet have climbed the mountain⁸ of expiation. His own brow has been marked

¹ These geographical names are all of unhealthy places belonging to Italy.

² "The personages of Dante are all from real life. They are men and women undergoing actual experiences. Their characters and fates are, what all human characters and fates really are, types of spiritual law."
³ *Inferno*, Canto I.

⁴ On the doors of Hell were written, "All ye that enter here leave Hope behind."—Canto III. ⁵ Canto IX.

⁶ The names of two of the fiends in the weird scene in Canto XXI., who plunge sinners into a pit full of burning pitch.

⁷ Dante climbs out of Hell by clinging to and crawling up the body of the giant Lucifer.—Canto XXXIV.

⁸ The Mount of Purgatory, up which Dante climbs on the way from the Pit of Hell to the Heights of Heaven.

by the purifying angel.¹ The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis² differ from those of Gulliver.³ The author of Amadis would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man, who lived nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights; and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe,⁴ tells us of pygmies,⁵ and giants, flying islands and philosophising horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

36. Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has suc-

¹ The angel who, at the entrance to Purgatory, marks Dante's brow with seven P's for the seven deadly sins (*peccata*). These marks disappear as he goes upward.

² The hero of a popular romance of chivalry, *Amadis of Gaul*.

³ In *Gulliver's Travels*, the best known work of Dean Swift (1667-1745).

⁴ An English village, to which Gulliver retired after his travels.

⁵ Pygmy, a Greek word, describing a people of dwarfs in ancient Greek legend, who were supposed to measure one cubit (*pygmé*) and to live in Africa. Such dwarf people have been found by recent explorers all the way from Egypt to the Cape of Good Hope. Macaulay uses the word here, as it is often used in English, as a general term for dwarfs.

ceeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him ; and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery, is that of attempting to philosophise too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

37. What is spirit ? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted ? We observe certain phænomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing ; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words indeed ; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvass and a box of colours to be called a painting.

38. Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of mankind can never feel an interest in them. They must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude, in all ages and nations, to idolatry, can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is every reason to believe, worshipped one invisible deity.¹ But the necessity of having something

¹ All this is a doubtful speculation. The first inhabitants of Greece never were worshippers of one God. It is true that, as civilisation advances in Greece, the number of Greek deities seems to us to increase.

more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of Gods and Goddesses. In like manner, the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, speculatively, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon ¹ has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception, but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form—walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross—that the prejudices of the Synagogue,² and the doubts of the Academy,³ and the pride of the Portico,⁴ and the fasces

But this was because the Greek religious and æsthetic imagination deepened, so that the national power to represent deity in visible form increased. The national imaginative gifts, as well as the gradual grouping of many local deities in one Olympus, produced the “idolatrous” results described in the text. It was only slowly that the thinkers of the Greek race reached the idea of one invisible Godhead manifested in all gods.

¹ See, for the famous Five Causes of the Growth of Christianity, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xv.

² The Jewish congregation of worshippers.

³ The most skeptical school of Greek Philosophy. It was named from the sacred grove of the hero Academos, in which Plato and Aristotle held their schools.

⁴ Portico, *i.e.*, the Stoa Pæcilé or Painted Porch, whence the Stoic

of the Lictor,¹ and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust! Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new Paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George² took the place of Mars; St. Elmo³ consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux; the Virgin Mother and Cecilia⁴ succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity, and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings, but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good.

philosophers took their name. They were disciples of Zeno (about 300 B.C.). That part of their philosophy which has been remembered best gives rules for conduct of life. A haughty superiority to the sorrows and joys of life and an aristocratic aloofness from the common herd of mankind marked their ethical practice.

¹ The authority of the executive officers of Roman State was symbolised by the *fascēs* or the axe and bundle of rods carried by an attendant called a Lictor.

² St. George of Cappadocia, the warrior saint and dragon-slayer, a great saint of the Eastern Church. His fame was carried to Europe by the Crusaders; his day was made a holiday in the Western Church in 1222. After Edward III. he is noted specially as the patron-saint of England. The historical matter in his legend is very obscure, but he is said to have been martyred in Diocletian's persecution in 303 A.D.

³ St. Elmo, a patron of Italian sailors. "St. Elmo's fire" is the name given to the electric flames often seen about the masts and yards of ships. This was attributed to Castor and Pollux in ancient times.

⁴ St. Cecilia (230 A.D.), patron-saint of church music. Her legend says that she sang praises to God just before her execution. St. Cecilia's Day is the occasion in England of yearly musical festivals. Handel's *Messiah* was written for such a celebration.

Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

39. From these considerations, we infer that no poet who should affect that metaphysical accuracy, for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. (The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical colouring can produce no illusion, when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirits should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts?" This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce the reader to drop it from his thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground: he left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency; but,

though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously, through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

40. Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque indeed, beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel; but it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault, indeed, on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of his poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still, it is a fault. His supernatural agents excite an interest, but it is not the mysterious interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk with his ghosts and demons,¹ without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan,² ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata³ is justly celebrated. Still Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an

¹ Now spelled, demons.

² In Mozart's opera *Don Juan*, the hero invites to sup with him the statue of the dead *Commendatore* whom he had slain. A devil animates the statue; it accepts the invitation; a weird banquet is given, and in the midst of it the statue fetches away the sinful hero to hell.

³ Farinata speaks to Dante from the interior of a burning tomb. *Inferno*, Canto X.

auto da fe.¹ Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice.² Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

41. The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso³ and Klopstock.⁴ They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

42. Perhaps the gods and dæmons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton.⁵

¹ Literally "act of faith," a Portuguese phrase for a public act of punishment of heretics, *e.g.*, by burning them alive.

² Beatrice Portinari was a maiden of Florence whom Dante worshipped with a highly idealised poet's love. She died, a young girl, ten years before the writing of the *Divine Comedy*. She figures, however, in the poem as a visionary being who guides Dante through Paradise. This celestial creature symbolises the highest thoughts and aspirations of the poet himself. The poet's lower aims are called with the same symbolism his "lesser loves." For these "lesser loves" Beatrice chides him when she first meets him in the other world. See *Purgatorio*, Canto XXX.

³ Tasso, a celebrated Italian epic poet (1544–1595). He wrote *Rinaldo* and *Jerusalem Delivered*.

⁴ Klopstock, a German poet (1729–1803), wrote a poem called *The Messiah*. Both Tasso and Klopstock portray evil spirits in a somewhat crude fashion.

⁵ Dæmon, a Greek word meaning a spirit. Here Macaulay uses it for those incorporeal creations of Æschylus, neither gods nor mor-

The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity¹ and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. His legends seem to harmonise less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticoes in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite, in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris,² or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols.³ His favourite gods are those of the elder generations—the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart—the gigantic Titans⁴ and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus,⁵ half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. He bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity,

tals, like the personages called “Force” and “Might,” or the “Furies,” or “Prometheus.”

¹ Amenity, pleasing quality.

² Osiris, a chief god of Egypt, god of the dead in the after-life, a deity personifying the triumph of the human soul over death. He was worshipped with mystical ceremonies in the Egyptian funeral customs.

³ In the Hindu mythology the gods symbolise their power by the number of their heads and limbs.

⁴ The Titans, a mysterious group of deities in Greek mythology, considered to have preceded and to have been dethroned by the reigning deities of the Olympian dynasty.

⁵ Prometheus, a Titan who befriended man against the purposes of Zeus by the gift of fire, stolen from heaven, which fire symbolises also the inventive intelligence. For this he was punished by Zeus by imprisonment in chains on a lonely rock where vultures tore him and sun and cold beat on him without mercy.

the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer¹ in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael,² against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermittent misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself!³

43. To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add, that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists.⁴ They rarely obtrude

¹ The myth relates that Prometheus knew some secret ordinance of Fate, under which some one was to arise who should cast out Zeus from sovereign power in heaven and release Prometheus from punishment. Zeus sent the god Hermes, in the play, to extort the secret from Prometheus, but Prometheus refused to reveal what might enable his enemy Zeus to escape his doom.

² "Michael, of celestial armies prince," battles with Satan when he rebels against God in heaven. The story of the fearful contest is told to Adam by the angel Raphael in *Paradise Lost*, Book VI. Satan is beaten finally by the intervention of the Messiah armed with the thunders of Jehovah.

³ See *Paradise Lost*, Book I.

⁴ Egotist, one who is absorbed in himself.

their idiosyncracies¹ on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced, by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.

44. The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of thought ; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth, nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible, even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, “ a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness ! ”² The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne ! All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.³

¹ Idiosyncracy, special peculiarity of temper or constitution.

² *Job* x. 22.

³ The most famous picture of Dante is that attributed to his

45. Milton¹ was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover—and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman,² were now the favourite writers of the sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd—which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these his Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene—to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rabble of Satyrs and Goblins.³ If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, it might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic contemporary, Giotto, a fresco on a wall in the Bargello at Florence.

¹ For Milton's story see the Introduction, 10–19. *Paradise Lost* was written chiefly, if not wholly, after the restoration of Charles II. to the throne in 1660.

² In the vociferous style of one who, like the old-fashioned bellman or town-crier, forced the public to listen to what he said.

³ Satyrs, in ancient classic myth, sylvan deities, becoming bestial in the fancies of the later ages. Goblins, knavish spirits of the mediæval legends haunting woods and dark places.

patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was, when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be—when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die!¹

46. Hence it was, that, though he wrote the *Paradise Lost* at a time of life² when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither *Theocritus*³ nor *Ariosto*⁴ had a finer or more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of night-

¹ The contrasts in this paragraph are rather over-emphasized for rhetorical effect. The first period alluded to, the "eve of great events," is 1639. For the historical situation then, see Introduction, 8. His "domestic afflictions" were the want of harmony existing between his first wife and himself, the many deaths in his immediate family, and the unfilial conduct of his daughters. Milton died in 1674, not, however, in a "hovel," nor too poor to leave £1,500. Nor was he "disgraced." His last years, though poor, were not without comfort, happiness, and respect. See Introduction, 17.

² This poem was written in the years from 1658 to 1667. Milton would then be fifty to sixty years of age during its composition. He had planned it for many years before.

³ *Theocritus*, the greatest and the first pastoral poet in the world, was a Sicilian Greek of the latter part of the third century B.C. Andrew Lang has made a beautiful English version of his idylls and poems describing country life and landscape.

⁴ *Ariosto*, a great Italian poet (1474-1533), wrote *Orlando Furioso* and many lyric poems.

ingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. (His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside.¹ His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.)

47. Traces indeed of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works ; but it is most strongly displayed in the sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja² in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet ; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face³ over which the grave had closed forever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these

§§ 47-49. *Sixth topic : The Sonnets.*

¹ Read Matthew Arnold's judgment on this sentence, in his *Essay on Milton*. See *Suggestions for Teachers*, iii., (1).

² Filicaja (1642-1707), an Italian poet and jurist, especially noted for his sonnets. Petrarch, the Italian scholar who is chiefly remembered for famous sonnets written in praise of his Laura.

³ This refers to his second wife, Catherine Woodcock, who lived only fifteen months after their marriage. His dream of her is commemorated in *Sonnet XXIII*. Milton was totally blind before their marriage ; very possibly he never saw her face, and Macaulay had perhaps forgotten too that her face is veiled in the sonnet.

little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology,¹ or perhaps still more of the Collects, of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.²

48. The sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel.³ It would indeed be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer, from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

49. His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high, and an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes,⁴ liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the

¹ The Greek Anthology is a monster collection of short occasional poems, written through many centuries by many hands.

² *Sonnet XVIII.*

³ Milton published twenty-three sonnets. Some of them are indeed the most beautiful sonnets in English, if not in the world. See Wordsworth's *Sonnet upon Milton.*

⁴ In the Zoroastrian religion there are two deities, Ahurô Mazdaô and Angrô Mainyusha, called here Oromasdes and Arimanes. The first is creator of light, life, good; the second, of darkness, filth, death. Both are eternal, and they are eternally contending for the mastery of the universe. For objections to this comparison of Macaulay's, see Matthew Arnold, *A French Critic on Milton.*

English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests,¹ which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years,² and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear.

50. Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable.³ The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty laboured under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable⁴ complained so bitterly.

¹ Macaulay has in his mind the recent setting up of the South American republics—Colombia (1819), Peru (1821), Mexico (1823), and others. They had been hitherto colonies of Spain.

² Greece had lost her independence by the conquest of the Romans, 146 B.C. She won it again, in 1829 A.D., from the Turks. The War of Grecian Independence (1821–1829) was going on while Macaulay was writing. For the movements of politics in Europe at the time when Macaulay wrote this essay, see Introduction, 8.

³ The estimation in which Milton was held by Englishmen long depended on the critic's party politics. It still depended, in Macaulay's day, somewhat on the critic's political sympathies. As therefore Milton's public conduct is always judged from the party standpoint, Macaulay labors to justify the action of the whole Roundhead party, Milton included.

⁴ The fable is this: A man and a lion, travelling through a forest, and boasting of their strength and prowess, came to a statue of a man strangling a lion, on which the man remarked, "See how strong we are, and how we can prevail over even the king of beasts." To this the lion replied, "Yes, but if the lions knew how to erect statues, the man would have been under the lion's paw."

Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads¹ had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson.² May's History of the Parliament³ is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause, Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay, have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candour or by skill.⁴ On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon,⁵ and that of Hume.⁶ The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with

¹ Puritans, so called in contempt, because they did not wear their hair in long "love locks" like the Cavaliers.

² *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson by his Widow, Lucy*. It is published in Bohn's Standard Library. It has also been edited by C. H. Firth.

³ *Breviary of the Parliament of England* by Thomas May, Esq., 1650.

⁴ *Critical History of England*, John Oldmixon; *Memoirs of General Ludlow*, C. H. Firth; *History of England from the Accession of James I. to that of the House of Brunswick*, by Catherine Macaulay.

⁵ *The History of the Rebellion, etc., begun in the year 1641, by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon*. An edition by W. D. Macray is published in the Clarendon Press Series.

⁶ *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, by David Hume.

religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate, while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

51. The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I. shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority that we have no objection to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust¹ without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favour of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favour of what is called the Great Rebellion.²

§§ 49-88. SECOND DIVISION OF THE ESSAY: MILTON'S CONDUCT AS A CITIZEN. THE CONDUCT OF HIS PARTY ASSOCIATES. §§ 49-72. *First topic: Milton's joining the party of the Parliament in 1642.* §§ 49-51. *Under the impressions derived from seventeenth and eighteenth century literature, many Englishmen fail to see that the Long Parliament was defending principles of government accepted by all England since 1688, and now struggling for recognition in the rest of the world.*

§§ 51-57. *The rebellion of Parliament against Charles I. is therefore justified by a comparison, point by point, with the glorious Revolution dethroning James II.*

¹ To take part in a military spectacle where knights attacked each other as if in warfare.

² For a brief review of all these events, see the Introduction, 13-16.

52. In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his miserable creature Laud,¹ while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for a priestly character, and, above all, a stupid and ferocious intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant; but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

53. The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented. There is a certain class of men² who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent, they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be anything unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and

¹ William Laud (1573-1645), the celebrated Archbishop of Canterbury, and one of the foremost statesmen in the King's party. For a more judicial estimate of him than Macaulay's, see his Life by Hutton, in the *Leaders of Religion Series* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1895).

² Macaulay is here attacking his own political enemies. He was of those who were trying at this time to relieve their Catholic fellow-citizens in Great Britain of all political disabilities. This was accomplished in 1829. Macaulay pauses here in the current of his essay to attack those hypocritical Protestants of his own day who pretended to cite the example of the great Whigs of 1688 to cover a bigoted hatred of Catholics in 1825. See Introduction, 8.

dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that

“ Their labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil.”¹

54. To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution, these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect² there was which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was, so unhappily circumstanced that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth, zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy.³ But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William⁴ is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men.⁵ Then the Revolution is a glorious era. The

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Book I., 164, 165.

² The Roman Catholics, especially in Ireland. See Introduction, 17.

³ See Introduction, 8.

⁴ William, Prince of Orange, afterwards William III. of England.

⁵ John Somers (1652–1716) first became famous as counsel for the Seven Bishops; he took a leading part in framing the great Declaration of Right; under William he held high offices of state, especially those of Attorney General and Lord Chancellor. For his character see Macaulay's *History*, vol. vii., chap. xx. Charles, Earl of Shrewsbury (1660–1718), one of the seven Whigs who invited William to England; he afterwards helped to proclaim George I. His his-

very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite¹ slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel² than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.³ They may truly boast that they look not at men but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles, or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederic the Protestant.⁴ On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James the Second was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant Revolution.

55. But this certainly was not the case. Nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment⁵ believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes,⁶ or if, wish-
tory is very curious and characteristic of the time. See Macaulay's *History*.

¹ Jacobite, a supporter of the Stuarts. *Jacobus*, Latin for *James*, would be the king's name in Latin documents and on the coins of James II.

² St. George's Channel separates England and Ireland.

³ The traditional toast of the Whigs: "To the glorious and immortal memory of King William."

⁴ Charles means, of course, the Stuart King. William is the Prince of Orange. But Macaulay means to taunt his own contemporaries, not only with their affected admiration for past heroes, but also for their actual sympathy with despots of the present. So the kings of Spain and of Prussia, named Ferdinand and Frederic, most unpopular in 1825 in England, must be alluded to here. See Introduction, 8.

⁵ Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, wrote an abridged history of England.

⁶ One who changes from one opinion or sect to another.

ing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily, not to popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic; but they excluded Catholics from the crown, because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom."¹ Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688, must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question then is this: Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England?

56. No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the King himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery.² Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion, mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in

¹ Resolution of Parliament in 1689: "that King James, having endeavored to subvert the Constitution of this kingdom by breaking the original contract between King and People, and by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons, having violated the fundamental laws and having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, has abdicated the government, and the throne is thereby vacant."

² See Introduction, 13.

the Declaration of Right,¹ presented by the two houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated; arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments, were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.²

57. But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives,³ did the parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of civil war? The ship money⁴ had been given up. The Star Chamber⁵ had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good, by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the

§§ 57-72. *Admitting, then, the justice of Parliament's quarrel with the king, was their rebellion too strong a measure? When are revolutions justified?*

¹ Declaration of Right presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, February, 1689, on the occasion of Parliament's declaring them to be King and Queen of England. See Introduction, 17.

² See Introduction, 13.

³ Prerogatives, privileges sovereign and exclusive, subject to no restriction or interference, belonging specially to the king. See Introduction, 13.

⁴ Ship money. See Introduction, 13.

⁵ A peculiar court of Charles I. It had been developed from a sort of committee of the king's council, originating under the Tudor monarchy. See Introduction, 13.

analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He, too, had offered to call a free parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant.¹ The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had, no doubt, passed salutary laws. But what assurance had they that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives. But where was the security that he would not resume them? They had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

58. Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared, for wickedness and impudence, to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right.² The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent

¹ See Introduction, 17. In fact from 1668 to 1748 the disputes over the English succession were incessant. It involved England in quarrels with the French King, and furnished pretexts for constant quarrels at home. As to the dynasty, William was a stranger in England to the end of his life, and the first two Georges never spoke English well, and preferred Hanover as a residence. The national debt was created by Montague's borrowing on bonds at 10 per cent. for the expenses of William's government in 1692. It may therefore be said to be due to the Revolution.

² Presented in 1628 to Charles I. by his third parliament. It forbade taxation without consent of a parliament. See Introduction, 13.

for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent. The subsidies are voted. But no sooner is the tyrant relieved, than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very Act which he had been paid to pass.

59. For more than ten years the people had seen the rights, which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament: another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut*?¹ Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second petition of right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

60. The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was even Oliver Cromwell,² his

¹ "The king wills it." This is the form of consent by which an Act of Parliament is accepted by the monarch and made law at the present day. It comes down from the time when French was the language of the Kings of England.

²The character of Oliver Cromwell is not even yet properly estimated. Since Macaulay wrote, however, the drift of opinion has grown

bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood.

61. We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed, that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke¹ dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

more and more favorable even among those who may consider themselves his political opponents. The curious may read Carlyle's great *Life of Cromwell* and Gardiner's recently published volumes on the Commonwealth in his great series on the history of England. See, for a good short history, Frederic Harrison's *Oliver Cromwell* (Macmillan, 1888).

¹Named from Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641), the great Flemish portrait-painter. He was knighted and made court painter by Charles I., who sat to him many times. King Charles may be said to be known to posterity exclusively by these pictures, which "once seen are impossible to forget." He painted also a famous picture of the children of Charles I. The beautiful "Vandyke dress" appears in most of these portraits; it is specially characterized by the collar and trimmings of lace.

62. For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations. And if, in that relation, we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

63. We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him, which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors.¹ This point Hume has laboured, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

64. These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

¹ The house of Tudor (Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary and Elizabeth) was named from Owen Tudor, Earl of Richmond, father of Henry VII.

65. The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford.¹ They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers.² Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers³ riding naked through the marketplace; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus⁴; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag⁵—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

66. Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us

¹ Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, the adviser of Charles I. See Introduction, 13. He was "attainted," that is condemned to death for high treason by a bill in Parliament, instead of by regular legal proceedings before a court, and executed in 1641.

² For the Puritan and his ways, see Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. i., chap. 1.

³ George Fox first preached "the breaking forth of God's power" in 1648. His disciples were identified with many extravagances of the time, some of them making violent appeals to the emotions of the multitude. The extraordinary excesses here alluded to were intended by these Quaker prophets as an imitation of the symbolical actions of the Prophet Isaiah. *Isaiah* xx. 2. The "Quakers" had no regular organization as a sect before 1666.

⁴ Fifth-monarchy-men (1657), believing in the immediate coming of Christ, and also that it was their duty to inaugurate his kingdom by force. The other four monarchies alluded to were Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome.

⁵ 1 *Samuel* xv. 32.

to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres.¹ Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the Devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?²

67. If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a people. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The heads of the church and state reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion: it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

¹ In the first publication of this essay Macaulay wrote "the sceptres of Brandenburg and Braganza," *i.e.*, Prussia and Portugal, referring especially to the "despots" of his own day, as above noted.

² The process of expelling evil spirits by religious or magical ceremonies.

68. It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. (Till men have been for some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are always sober. In climates where wine is a rarity, intemperance abounds.) A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres.¹ It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice: they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendour and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms² were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

69. Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy,³ who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear, at certain seasons, in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise

¹ The Rhine country in Germany is full of vineyards where Hock and Moselle wines are made. Xeres, or Jerez de la Frontera, is not a river but a town in Andalusia, near Cadiz, in Spain, where Sherry wine was first made and named.

² A false argument devised to show ingenuity or to deceive.

³ See *Orlando Furioso*, Canto XLIII.

were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

70. There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell, he cannot bear the light of day: he is unable to discriminate colours or to recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to conflict, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

71. Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

72. Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of Public Liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blameable excesses of that time. The favourite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides.¹ We have throughout abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the Sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys² and retain James? The person of a King is sacred. Was the person of James considered

§§ 72-78. *Second topic: Milton's association with the Regicides and Cromwell.* §§ 72-75. *The execution of Charles not so very different a measure from the deposition of James. But even if one disapproves of the regicide, one may admit the necessity of defending it at that time.*

¹ Commonly, the members of the High Court of Justice, who sentenced Charles I. Also, as an abstract noun in the singular, regicide is the act of killing a king.

² The wicked Chief Justice (1648-1689), minister, and adviser of James II., notorious for flagrant injustice and brutality on the bench. See Macaulay's *History*, Vols. II., III.

sacred at the Boyne?¹ To discharge cannon against an army in which a King is known to be posted, is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his various slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters!² When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November,³ thank God for wonderfully conducting

¹The battle of the Boyne, a river in the north of Ireland, fought July 1st, 1690, between the Dutch and English troops, under King William, and the English, French, and Irish, under King James. See Gardiner's *Student's History of England*.

²William, Prince of Orange, who headed the attack on the King, was the son of Mary, sister of James II., and thus his nephew. Mary, William's wife, and Anne, his successor, were daughters of James II. by Anne Hyde. The "innocent heir" of James II. was his son by Mary of Este, his wife. This heir, after James's death, was called James III. by the Jacobites, and the "Old Pretender" by the partisans of the House of Hanover.

³The English Prayer Book, when Macaulay wrote, contained a "Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving" for use on November fifth, celebrating the delivery of England from "Popish Tyranny and Arbitrary Power." It was the anniversary of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot and also of the arrival of William in England. The thirtieth day of January was kept as a "Day of Prayer and Fasting for the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First." Both these services were taken out of the Prayer Book by Royal Warrant of Queen Victoria in 1859. From these services Macaulay is quoting.

his servant, William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our King and Governor, can on the thirtieth of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

73. We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles ; not because the constitution exempts the King from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions ; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as “ a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy ; ” but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage : his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians¹ could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father : they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

74. But, though we think the conduct of the Regicides blameable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred ; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion ; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to de-

¹ Those who desired to introduce into England church government by bodies of Elders or Presbyters instead of by Bishops. After Charles's death this party did support Charles II., as they feared and disliked the religious theories of the Independents of the Army more than they feared royal tyranny.

send it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius¹ would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the “*Æneæ magni dextra*,”² gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

75. We wish to add a few words relative to another subject on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell, his conduct during the administration of the Protector.³ That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the

§§ 75-78. *Discussion of Cromwell's good government compared with Parliament's betrayal of trust on one side and Stuart misgovernment on the other.*

¹ Claudius Salmasius (1588-1653), the most famous scholar of Milton's day, professor at the University of Leyden. For this pamphlet controversy over the execution of Charles between Milton and Salmasius, see the Introduction, 16.

² “Thou fallest by the right hand of great Æneas,” a line from Virgil's *Æneid* (X., 830). This now proverbial phrase describes the death of a person wholly unknown falling by the sword of a great hero.

³ For the Protectorate, see the Introduction, 16.

country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it, till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy.¹ But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world.² He reformed the representative system in a manner that has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder,³ or an American President. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority—not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time, and the opportunities which he had of aggrandising

¹ "Not a dog barked at their going," said Cromwell afterwards. An oligarchy is the government of a state by a few of its citizens. Venice was always called a republic, because it was not governed by one king or other monarch. But its government shrunk slowly from government by general meetings of citizens into an oligarchy governed by Councils (Great Council, Small Council, Council of Ten), and at last supreme power fell into the hands of only Three.

² The "Instrument of Government," the first and last time England ever had a written constitution. See the Introduction, 16.

³ The chief magistrate of the Dutch Republic. The word "stadtholder" originally meant "governor of a province," "stead-holder," or lieutenant. But it came to mean the chief magistrate of the United Provinces.

himself, he fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar.¹ Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

76. Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself, by the almost irresistible force of circumstances; though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts.² That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it,³ the darkest and

¹ Bolivar (1783-1830), the "Liberator," who emancipated the colonies of Spain and created the great republic of Bolivia in South America, which, however, fell to pieces after his death into several states. He was a popular hero to young Liberals of this time. See Introduction, 8.

² The Stuarts, James I., Charles I., Charles II., James II., sat on the English throne from 1603-1688. For their general history, see Macaulay's *History of Eng'and*.

³ 1660-1688, the reigns of Charles II. and James II., often called the "Restoration."

most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition, which stopped short of open rebellion, provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice,¹ were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents,² sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipula-

¹ See Introduction, 16.

² The Independents were distinguished from the Presbyterians in that they desired no general church government in the nation, but that each congregation of worshippers should be independent of every other.

tion for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.¹

77. Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival² that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha³ of every fawning dean.⁴ In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch,⁵ and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with

¹ But Charles II. was not known to be a "frivolous and heartless tyrant." He was only thirty years old at that time, and might be supposed to have learned something from his father's fate. This part of the essay, as well as the next few paragraphs, is rather too strongly stated by Macaulay. Read Matthew Arnold, *A French Critic on Milton*.

² Louis XIV. of France.

³ 1 *Corinthians* xvi. 22. Anathema, anything devoted to evil, "an accursed thing." Maranatha, "The Lord hath come," means only "Amen!"

⁴ A dean in England is the head of the corporation of a Cathedral. The place is very honorable and has been held by the best of the English clergy. The word is used here by Macaulay to stand for the upper clergy in general of these reigns.

⁵ The allusion here is to the two fiends in *Paradise Lost*; Belial (Book II., verse 108), the graceful and humane but false and hollow angel, is of course Charles II.; Moloch (Book II., verse 43), the cruel, is King James II.

the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

78. Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. At a period of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with such fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose, who kissed the hand of the king in 1640,¹ and spat in his face in 1649, who shouted with equal glee when

§§ 78-87. *Third topic: Milton's contemporaries classified and described.* §§ 79-84. *The Puritans.*

¹ The Long Parliament assembled in 1640; the king was executed in 1649. Cromwell was inaugurated "Lord Protector" in 1653; his body was disinterred and treated with indignity in 1661. Calves' heads were set on the table by the fiercer rebels to commemorate the beheading of the king. In the festivities celebrating the return of Charles II. in 1660 broiled rumps were cooked and eaten in the streets of London to ridicule the "rump" Parliament. In the flight of Charles II., after his defeat at Worcester, he was said to have found a hiding-place in an oak tree. The oak was the Royalist symbol thereafter.

Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps, and cut down oak-branches or stuck them up, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserved to be called partisans.

79. We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and the stage, at the time when the press and stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were as a body unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists.¹ The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases, which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.²

¹ For example, Butler's *Hudibras*.

² Such as Scott's *Woodstock* and *Peveril of the Peak*, which are a good deal affected by this view of the Puritans. Scott represents the current opinion of Macaulay's Tory contemporaries.

“Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
 Che mortali perigli in se contiene :
 Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
 Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene.”¹

80. Those who roused the people to resistance, who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years, who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen, who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy, who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics.² Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry, or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body, to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets, which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix our choice on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.³

¹ “This is the source of laughter and this the stream
 Which contains mortal perils in itself:
 Now here to hold in check our desire,
 And to be very cautious, becomes us.”

See Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, XV., 57ff. In the island of the witch Armida, two knights find the river of Laughter. Their guide warns them in these words.

² Oliver Cromwell's strong policy made England a menace to her opponents and a power of the first rank on the Continent, whereas under Charles II. and James II. she dropped into a second-rate power.

³ The well-known story in the *Merchant of Venice*.

81. The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence.¹ They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but his favour; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which shall never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt: for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and

¹ An allusion to the first question and answer in the Westminster Catechism: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the Evangelist, and the harp of the prophet.¹ He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

82. Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears.² He was half-maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels, or the tempting whispers of fiends. He

¹ Evangelists are supposed to write, as historians, with pens; but according to classic tradition, oracles and prophets are supposed to speak in song, to musical accompaniment. The Psalms and the Prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures are of the nature of poetry and therefore are sung to the harp.

² This exalted temper appears in the letters and biographies of many Puritans. See for example Bunyan's *Life*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision,¹ or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane,² he thought himself intrusted with the scepter of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him.³ But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle.⁴ These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious

¹The *Visio beatifica* of the school-men, the philosophers of the Middle Ages, meaning the direct sight of God himself which makes the happiness of the blessed. See Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII. See also *Paradise Lost*, Book I., v. 613. The idea is drawn from one of Jesus' beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

²Sir Harry Vane (1612-1662), Puritan and mystic, was a republican by conviction and therefore leader of the theoretic republicans in Parliament against the protectorate of Cromwell. Cromwell himself, in the act of expelling the Parliament in 1653, uttered the historic exclamation, "The Lord deliver me from Sir Harry Vane!" Vane was governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636-7, where he illustrated his impracticable idealism in the controversy with Winthrop and the clergy over the matter of Anne Hutchinson. He was executed by Charles II. as a regicide in 1662.

³Fleetwood, one of the officers of the army, married Cromwell's daughter. For this story of his weakness and religious mania when called upon to control the army after Cromwell's death, see Clarendon's *History* (XVI., 108). "God had spit in his face" were the wild words Fleetwood used.

⁴The "New Model Army" of 1646 was formed by Cromwell of religious volunteers, chiefly drawn from the Independents. It was never defeated.

zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus¹ with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

83. Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach: and we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity; that they had their anchorites² and their crusades,³ their Dunstons and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars.⁴ Yet, when all cir-

¹ Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book V.

² Anchorite, a Greek word meaning one who has retired from the world, a hermit.

³ The wars waged in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries by the European Christians under the badge of the cross, to rescue the holy places of Palestine from the possession of Mohammedans. The word is now used of any warfare with a religious or even with any high moral purpose.

⁴ Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury (959 A. D.), generally famous for

cumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

84. The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which co-operated with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios¹ with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch² as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines³ of the French Revolution. But

his ruthlessness in putting his king, Edgar, under the power of the church. De Montfort was famous for the fierce cruelty with which he put down the religious heresy of the Albigenses in Provence in 1208. This is not Simon de Montfort, the great English earl. Dominic (1170-1221), a Spaniard who founded the great Dominican order of monks, famed for their vigor in pursuit of heresy, and as preachers and teachers. Escobar (1589-1669), a Spanish Jesuit, a writer on morals, celebrated for his alleged doctrine that purity of intention justifies actions in themselves wrong.

§ 84. *The Heathens.*

¹ See Matthew Arnold's essay on *Lord Falkland*. For Thomas the Doubter read *St. John* xx. 24; for Gallio, *Acts* xviii. 17.

² Plutarch (46 A.D.), author of a work containing parallel lives of forty-six Greeks and Romans, grouped in pairs. The inspiring tone of these famous biographies and the abundance of maxims and examples of lofty political conduct contained therein, have made Plutarch stimulating to the patriotism of young men of the poetic type in many great crises of the modern world's history. "Plutarch's men" is a by-word for the greatest men of antiquity. The best translation is North's (*Tudor Translations*: David Nutt).

³ Brissotines, or Girondists, the moderate republicans who were

it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

85. We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candour. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse-boys, gamblers, and bravoës, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars¹ to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favourable specimen. Thinking, as we do, that the cause of the King was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers.² We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their ante-chambers, and the Janissaries³ who mount guard at their gates. Our royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing

overthrown by the Jacobins of the "Mountain" in the National convention. Their chiefs were executed in the Reign of Terror of 1793.

§ 85. *The Royalists.*

¹ Whitefriars, a district in London, named from the monastery established there in 1241. This district had certain privileges defending its residents against arrest by any law-officers until Charles II. abolished them. See Scott's *Fortunes of Nigel* for a picture of the inhabitants of Whitefriars in the reign of James I.

² Cavaliers, the party of Charles I.

³ Janissaries, a Turkish word meaning "New Troops," a body of Turkish infantry, the Sultan's guard, originally composed of children kidnapped from Christian parents. This famous guard, becoming too powerful for the Sultan to control, was abolished in 1826 after a frightful conflict and massacre.

at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valour, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honour, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa;¹ and like the Red-Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought; but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table² they had also many of its vir-

¹ *Faerie Queene*, Book I. In Spenser's allegory Duessa typifies falsehood. There is a reference in this allegory to Mary of Scotland, one of whose extraordinary gifts it was to win the loyal attachment of all who saw her, while on the other hand she brought into shame and dishonor all who devoted themselves to her service.

² Allusion to King Arthur of Britain and his Round Table of champions. See Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* for modern versions of these old romances, and, for careful study, *The Legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, by J. T. Knowles (F. Warne & Co., 1895). In the legend Merlin, the enchanter, made the Round Table, at which were held the solemn feasts of Arthur's band of knights. The Romances of the Round Table reflect the customs and character of the times during which they were composed.

tues, courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

86. Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the Court, from the conventicle¹ and from the Gothic² cloister,³ from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas⁴ revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

“As ever in his great task-master's eye.”⁵

§ 86. *Milton's own character composed of many different strains.*

¹ Conventicle, a place of meeting, secret or unauthorized, for religious worship. In England it was specially used of the meetings of Dissenters.

² Gothic, the name of a form of architecture characterized by pointed arches and clustered columns, which belongs especially to mediæval churches and abbeys.

³ Cloister, a place of monastic retirement.

⁴ The keeping of Christmas was made almost a party badge by the Royalists. Christmas was made a fast by Parliament in December, 1644. See Butler, in *Hudibras* :

“Rather than fail they will defy,
That which they love most tenderly ;
Quarrel with Mince-pies and disparage
Their best and dearest friend, Plum porridge,
Fat pig and goose itself oppose,
And blaspheme Custard through the nose.”

⁵ *Sonnet VII.*

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon,¹ their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolised by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonise best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination ; but he was not fascinated.² He listened to the song of the Sirens ; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe ; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning

¹ Jargon, confused, unintelligible talk. This refers to their peculiar diction, drawn so largely from misapplied phrases of the Old Testament of the English Bible. Macaulay has described this peculiarity above. Read some of Cromwell's letters for specimens.

² Ulysses, who, having had himself lashed to the mast of his ship, sailing by, heard the Sirens singing without the danger of being attracted to them. Circe, the enchantress, offered to all who entered her magic palace a cup to drink which changed them to beasts. Ulysses was previously provided with a more powerful magical herb, which secured its possessor against this disaster. He was untouched by the spell. The stories are in Homer's *Olysey*, Books X. and XII.

powers. The statesman was proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy¹ with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the *Penseroso*, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello.² His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does nought in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

87. That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendour still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn³ king and a persecuting hierarchy,⁴ he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for that species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against Ship-money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the

§§ 87-92. THIRD DIVISION OF THE ESSAY. MILTON'S PROSE WRITINGS. *His pamphlets devoted to the emancipation of human thought.*

¹ See the Introduction, 14. Compare the well-known lines in *Il Penseroso* beginning, "Let my due feet never fail."

² See Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act V., Scene ii.

³ Forsworn, perjured.

⁴ Hierarchy, a body of persons organized in ranks and orders for rule over sacred things. Here the archbishops and bishops, the priests and deacons of the English church.

press¹ and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the King and imprisoning the malignant,² acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

“ Oh, ye mistook ! Ye should have snatched his wand
 And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,
 And backward mutters of dissevering power,
 We cannot free the lady that sits here
 Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless.”³

88. To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians ; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle ; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular⁴ chain, and to

¹ This subject is discussed in the best known of Milton's prose works, the *Areopagitica*. It is published in the *Clarendon Press Series* ; also in Bohn's *Milton's Prose Works*, Vol. II.

² Malignant, a term applied by friends of the Parliament to all who took sides with the king.

³ *Comus*, 815-819.

⁴ *Sonnet XVI*. “Secular chain,” church government by state-officials, who are called secular, *i. e.*, not religious or spiritual.

save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system,¹ in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets² between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men, and the irrational dread of innovation.

89. That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope.³ At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosion.⁴ Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he

¹ The law requiring all publications in print to be licensed by government.

² Frontlet, a band on the forehead, worn during prayers, on which devout Jews inscribe sacred texts of their law. See *Deuteronomy* vi. 8; xi. 18. The treatise alluded to is the *Areopagitica*. See Introduction, 14.

³ A body of troops put upon a desperate service is called in military language a "forlorn hope."

⁴ Allusion to the dangers of miners exploring the unventilated recesses of a coal-mine, from the presence of explosive gases which take fire from a lantern.

maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide.¹ He attacked the prevailing systems of education.² His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility.

Nitor in adversum ; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.³

90. It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance.⁴ They are a perfect field of cloth of gold.⁵ The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his

¹ The first edition adds: "He ridiculed the *Eikon*." See Introduction, 16.

² In his Tractate: *Of Education*. See *Milton's Prose Works*, Vol. III.

³ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, II., 72, 73. These are the words of the Sun god, describing his climbing up against the motion of the sky, which is supposed in ancient astronomy to revolve in a direction contrary to the sun and the planets, and with a different speed. "I struggle against opposition: nor can I be conquered by the force which conquers all else; against the swift motion of the heavens I ride on." For a beautiful account of these heavenly motions, see Cicero's *de Republica*, Book VI.

⁴ Edmund Burke (1729-1797), a writer of English prose, who was noted for the splendor of his diction.

⁵ Allusion to the famous pageant of Henry VIII. and Francis I.

feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."¹

91. We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyse the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the *Areopagitica*, and the nervous rhetoric of the *Iconoclast*, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the *Treatise of Reformation*, and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.²

92. We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the great poet. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back.³ We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory

§§ 92 to End. CONCLUSION: *A vision of Milton.*

¹ For estimates of Milton's prose style, see the essays on Milton by Arnold and Lowell mentioned in the Introduction. Also consult Patison's *Milton*. This phrase is from *The Reason of Church Government, Milton's Prose Works*, Vol. II.

² For some account of these works, see the Introduction, p. 14.

³ This description is based upon an account given by a clergyman named Dr. Wright, who visited Milton in his lodgings. This account is preserved by Richardson, the painter, in his *Notes on Milton*.

and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood,¹ the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

93. These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism.² But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind,

¹ Thomas Elwood, a young Quaker, one of the friends and disciples who frequented the house of Milton in his old age. His biography, a very interesting book, is published in the *Great Biography Series*, edited by Howells (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.).

² After James Boswell, who wrote the famous life of his idol, Samuel Johnson. In it he records devoutly the most minute particulars of Johnson's life and personal habits. Macaulay reviews Croker's edition of this great book in a very amusing but not very just article (*Edinburgh Review*, 1831). In it he says: "Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten all biographies." "His work is universally allowed to be interesting, instructive, and original, yet it has brought the author nothing but contempt."

and which are visibly stamped with the image and super-
 scription of the Most High.¹ These great men we trust
 that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The
 sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to
 us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flow-
 ers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger² sent down from
 the gardens of Paradise to the earth, distinguished from
 the productions of other soils, not only by their superior
 bloom and sweetness, but by their miraculous efficacy to
 invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to
 delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the
 man who can study either the life or the writings of the
 great poet and patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not
 indeed the sublime works with which his genius has en-
 riched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured
 for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured
 every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he
 looked down on temptation and dangers, the deadly hatred
 which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which
 he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.³

¹ Phrases from the English Bible. See *Daniel* v. 27; *Matthew* xxii. 20. It would be an interesting inquiry to trace the Biblical phraseology all through this essay.

² Philip Massinger (1583-1640), an English dramatist, who edited or wrote largely a very popular play with this title, of which the heroine is a Christian martyr. The miracle described here was performed for the benefit of the scoffing persecutor, who challenges his victim, the Virgin Martyr, to send him back a flower from that Paradise to which she says she is going. Accordingly after her death, an angel appears on the stage bearing flowers and fruits from that celestial world.

³ For a discussion of Macaulay's florid rhetoric in these and similar paragraphs, read Matthew Arnold's essay entitled *A French Critic on Milton*.

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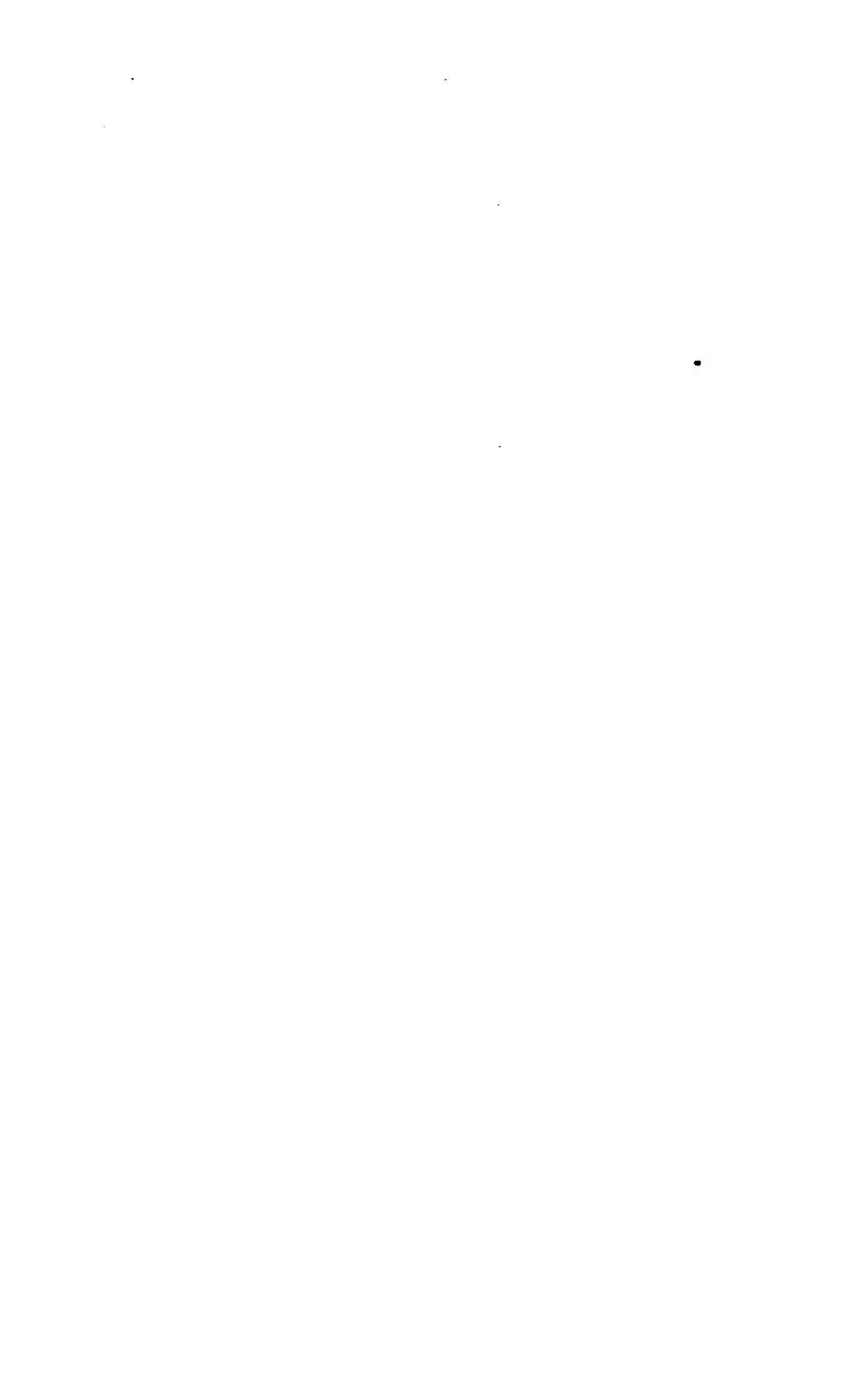
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